WHEN LIFE WAS YOUNG

AT THE OLD FARM

C. A. STEPHENS

PROPERTY OF CARL B. COSTELLO.

VERMIFUGE.

When Life Was Young

At the Old Farm in Maine

BY

C. A. STEPHENS

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DEDICATED

WITH CORDIAL BEST

WISHES TO THE MANY

Readers of the Youth's Companion

WHO HAVE SO KINDLY REMEMBERED

US AT THE OLD SQUIRE'S

FARM

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When Life Was Young

THE FARM ON THE PENNESSEEWASSEE

AWAY down East in the Pine Tree State, there is a lake dearer to my heart than all the other waters of this fair earth, for its shores were the scenes of my boyhood, when Life was young and the world a romance still unread.

Dearer to the heart; — for then glowed that roseate young joy and faith in life and its grand possibilities; that hope and confidence that great things can be done and that the doing of them will prove of high avail. For such is ever our natural, normal first view of life; the clear young brain's first vision of this wondrous bright universe of earth and sky; the first picture on the sentient plate of consciousness, and the true one, before error blurs and evil dims it; a joy and a faith in life which as yet, on this still imperfect earth of ours, comes but once, with youth.

The white settlers called it the Great Pond; but long before they came to Maine, the Indians had named it Pennesseewassee, pronounced Penny-see-was-see, the lake-where-the-women-died, from the Abnaki words, penem-pegouas-abem, in memory, perhaps, of some unhistoric tragedy.

From their villages on the upper Saco waters, the Pequawkets were accustomed to cross over to the Androscoggin and often stopped at this lake, midway, to fish in the spring, and again in winter to hunt for moose, then snowbound in their "yards." On snow-shoes, or paddling their birch canoes along the pine-

shadowed streams, these tawny, pre-Columbian warriors came and camped on the Pennesseewassee; we still pick up their flint arrow-heads along the shore; and it may even be that the short, brown Skraellings were here before them, in neolithic days.

There are two ponds, or lakes, of this name, the Great and the Little Pennesseewassee, the latter lying a mile and a half to the west of the larger expanse and connected with it by a brook.

To the northeast, north and west, the land rises in long, picturesque ridges and mountains of medium altitude; and still beyond and above these, in the west and northwest, loom Mt. Washington, Madison, Kearsarge and other White Mountain peaks.

The larger lake is a fine sheet of water, five miles in length, containing four dark-green islets; and the view from its bosom is one of the most beautiful in this our State-of-Lakes.

Hither, shortly after the "Revolution," came the writer's great-grandfather, poor in purse; for he had served throughout that long, and at times hopeless struggle for liberty. In payment he had received a large roll of "Continental Money," all of which would at that time have sufficed, scarcely, to procure him a tavern dinner. No "bounties," no "pensions," then stimulated the citizen soldiery. With little to aid him save his axe on his shoulder, the unremunerated patriot made a clearing on the slopes, looking southward upon the lake; and here, after some weeks, or months, of toil, he brought his young family, consisting of my great-grandmother and two children. They came up the lake in a skiff, fashioned from a pine log. Landing on a still remembered rock, it is said that the ex-soldier turned about, and taking the roll of Continental scrip from his pocket, threw it far out into the water, exclaiming, —

"So much for soldiering! But here, by the blessing of God, we will have a home yet!"

While going through the forest from the lake up to the clearing, a distance of a mile or more, they lost their way, for night had fallen, and after wandering for an hour, were obliged to sleep in the woods beneath the boughs of a pine; and it was not till the next forenoon that they found the clearing and the little log house in which my great-grandmother began her humble housekeeping.

Other settlers made their way hither; and other farms were cleared. Indians and moose departed and came no more. Then followed half a century of robust, agricultural life, on a virgin soil. The boys grew large and tall; the girls were strong and handsome. It was a hearty and happy era.

But no happy era is enduring; the young men began to take what was quaintly called "the western fever," and leave the home county for greater opportunities in Illinois, Wisconsin and Iowa. The young women, too, went away in numbers to work in the cotton factories at Lowell, Lawrence and Biddeford; few of them came back; or if they returned, they were not improved in health, or otherwise.

The third son of the Revolutionary soldier and pioneer remained at the old farm and lived on alone there after his own sons had left home, to enter other and less certain avocations than farming.

Then came war again, the terrible Civil War, when every one of these sons, true to their soldier ancestry, entered the army of the Republic. Of the five not one survived that murderous conflict. And so it happened that we, the grandchildren, war waifs and orphaned, came back in 1865-6, to live at grandfather's old farm on the Pennesseewassee.

We came from four different states of the Union, and two of us had never before even seen the others. It is, therefore, not remarkable that at first there were some small disagreements, due to our different ideas of things.

We were, of course, a great burden upon the old folks, who were compelled to begin life over again, so to speak, on our account. At the age of sixty-five grandfather set himself to till the farm on a larger scale, and to renew his lumbering operations, winters. Grandmother, too, was constrained to increase her dairy, her flocks of geese and other poultry, and to begin anew the labor of spinning and knitting.

It is but fair to say, however, that we all — with one exception, perhaps — had a decent sense of the obligations we incurred, and on most occasions, I believe, we did what we could to aid in the labors of the farm.

Much as we added to the burdens of our grandparents, I can now see that our coming lent fresh zest to their lives; they had something new to live for; they took hold of life again, for another ten years.

Ten years of youth.

It was Life's happy era with us, full of hopes and plans for the future, full, too, of those many jolts which young folks get from inexperience, nor yet free from those mistakes which all of us make, when we first set off on Life's journey. Like some bright panorama it passes on Memory's walls, so many pictures of that hopeful young life of ours at the old farm, as we grew up together, getting an education, or the rudiments of one, at the district school, and later at the village Academy, Kent's Hill Seminary and Bowdoin College.

And later I may try to relate how we came out and what we are still doing in life.

CHAPTER I

A NOSE IN COMMON

IT was on a sunny, windy May afternoon, late in the month, that the old gentleman drove to the railway station, eight miles from the farm, to fetch home the writer of this narrative. Till that day I had never seen either of my grandparents. But I knew that grandfather was to meet me at the station, and immediately on getting out of the car, I saw an erect, rather tall, elderly man with white hair and blue eyes, peering over the crowd, as if on the lookout for a boy. The instinctive stir of kinship made me sure who he was; but from some childish bashfulness I did not like to go directly to him and came around from one side, then touched his arm. He glanced down. "Are you looking for a small fellow like me, sir?" I asked.

"Yes, yes!" he exclaimed and laughed.

He looked at me searchingly, and his face grew sorrowful as he gazed.

"Yes, you are poor Edmund's boy. You've your father's forehead and eyes. Well, well, my son, I am glad to see you, and I hope you will like with us. You are coming to your father's old home, where he used to live when he was a boy. Your grandmother will be glad to see you; and you must not think of such a thing as being homesick. Your cousins are there; and there will be plenty of things to take up your mind."

I hastened to say that I was thankful for the home he was giving me, and that I had come to work and

pay my way. (My mother had fully explained the situation to me.)

Grandfather smiled and looked at me again. "Yes, you are quite a boy!" he said. "If you are as good a boy as your father was, your coming may prove a blessing instead of an additional tax on us."

I felt much gratified that he considered me "quite a boy," and said that I knew so many of us must be a great care; but that I meant to do my best and to take my father's place with him, if he ever needed a son. (More of my good mother's ideas, rather than my own, I am afraid.) Unwittingly I had touched a pleasant chord, albeit a sad one. Grandfather grasped me by the hand, and I saw that his worn blue eyes had moistened.

I drew out my baggage check and ran to get my small trunk, which I dragged forward while grandfather backed the wagon up to the platform. We drove off much reassured in each other; and I remember still that the old gentleman's kind words stirred me to an impulsive boyish resolve never to disappoint his confidence; but it was a resolve that I often lost sight of in the years that followed.

Presently our road led along the shore of the Pennesseewassee, past woodland and farms, mile on mile, with the lake often in sight. I was much interested in watching the loons, and also a long raft of peeled hemlock logs which four men were laboriously poling down the lake to the saw-mills.

After a time grandfather began to talk more cheerily; he spoke of farming and of town affairs to me as if I were older; and once or twice he called me *Edmund,* although that was not my name; but I did not correct the mistake; I thought that I could do that some other time.

"There will be six of you now," he said, "six cousins, all in one family; and all not far from the same age." Then he asked me my age. "Twelve,

almost thirteen," I replied. "Why, I thought you were fourteen," he said. "Well, now Addison is fifteen, or sixteen, and Theodora is near fourteen. Addison is a good boy and a boy of character, studious and scholarly. I do not know what his learning may lead to; sometimes I am afraid that he is imbibing infidelic doctrines; but he is a boy of good principles whom I would trust in anything. He is your Uncle William's son, you know, and came to our house two years ago, after his father's death at Shiloh. Theodora came at about the same time; she is your Aunt Adelaide's daughter. Poor Adelaide had to send her home to me after your Uncle Robert's death at Chancellorsville. Theodora is a noble-hearted child, womanly and considerate in all her ways; and she is as good a scholar as Addison.

"Then there's Halstead." Grandfather paused; and looking up in his face, I saw that a less cheery expression had come there. "Sometimes I do not know what to do with Halstead," grandfather remarked, at last. "He is a strange boy and has a very unsteady disposition. He came to us after your Uncle Henry's death. Your Uncle Henry and Uncle Charles both lost their lives in the Gettysburg fight. O this has been a terrible war! But what we have gained may be worth the sacrifice; I hope so! I hope so!" exclaimed the old gentleman, fervently.

"How old is Halstead?" I asked, after a silence of some minutes.

"He is fifteen; and your little cousins, Ellen and Wealthy, are twelve and nine," replied the old gentleman, resuming his account of my cousins to me. "They are your Uncle Charles' little girls, good dutiful children as one would ever need to have."

It was a long drive. At length the road, bending round the north end of the lake, led for half a mile or more up an easy hill. Here, on either hand, fields, inclosed with wide stone walls, were now beginning

to show green a little through the dry grass of last year. Other fields, ploughed and planted, faintly disclosed long rows of corn, just breaking ground, presided over by tutelar scarecrows which drummed on pans and turned glittering bits of tin as the breeze played over them.

"We have lately finished planting," grandfather explained to me. "The crows are very bold this spring. Halstead and Addison have been displaying their ingenuity out there, to frighten them off."

At some distance below the farm buildings, we entered between rows of apple trees, on both sides of the walled road, trees so large and leafy, that they quite shut out the fields. These were now in blossom.

"To-morrow will be White Sunday," grandfather remarked, as old Sol (the farm horse) toiled up the long hill. "Nature's own bright Whitsuntide, never brighter, despite war and mourning."

The great trees stood like huge bouquets; their peculiar, heavy odor loaded the air, which resounded to the deep, musical hum of thousands of bees. The near report of a gun rang out, followed by a great uproar of crows.

"The boys are scaring them out of the wheat-field," said grandfather.

I was looking for the house, when old Sol turned in before a high gate-frame of squared timber, overhung by the apple trees (we sometimes walked across on the top timber from one tree into the other), and I jumped down to open the gate. "Pull out the pin," grandfather said. I did so, and the gate swung of its own accord, disclosing a grassy lane, marked with wheel-ruts. The farm buildings stood at the head of the lane; a two-story house, large on the ground, lately painted straw color. Three great Balm o' Gilead trees towered over it. A long wood-shed led from the house to a new stable, with a gilt vane and cupola, which showed off somewhat to the disadvan-

tage of the two larger barns beyond it; for the latter were barns of the old times, high-posted with roofs of low pitch, and weathered from long conflicts with storms. Around them, like stunted children, clustered sheds, sties and a top-heavy corn-crib, stilted on four long, smooth legs.

Two boys, one carrying a gun, were coming in from the field; and I saw girls' faces at the front windows.

We drove in at the open door of the stable; and while we were alighting from the wagon, grandmother came out to welcome me and see, I suppose, what manner of lad I was. The two boys, larger than myself and bearing little resemblance to each other, approached to unharness the horse; they regarded me casually, without much apparent interest; and a sense of being an utter stranger there fell on me. I hardly ventured to glance at grandmother, who took me by both hands and looked earnestly in my face. I feared that she would kiss me before the others and durst not look at her. "Yes," I heard her say, in a low voice, "it is Edmund's own boy." She led the way into the house, through the long wood-shed and ell. Supper was waiting; and after a hasty wash at a long sink in the wood-shed, I followed grandfather through the kitchen to the room beyond it, where the large round table was spread. The family all came in and sat down. I still felt very strange to the place; but a glance into grandmother's kind face reassured me a little.

Grandmother, as I remember her, was then fair and plump, with hair partially gray, and a tinge of recent sadness upon a face naturally genial. With a quiet sigh, she seated me next to her — a sigh for the last of her boys.

"They are all here now, father," she said, "the last one has come. It's a strange thing to see them coming as they have and know why they have come."

My cousins were regarding me with a kind of curious sympathy. I picked out Halstead at a glance: a boy with a rather low forehead, dark complexion and a round head, which his short clipped hair caused to appear still more spherical. A hare-lip, never appropriately treated, gave his mouth a singular, grieved droop; but, as if in contradiction to this, his eyes were black and restless. The contrast with the steady gray eyes, and high forehead of the boy sitting next to him, was as great as could well be imagined.

As a boy, I naturally looked at the boys first; but while doing so, I knew that a girl in a black dress, was regarding me in a kind, cousinly way, a girl with a large, fair face, calm gray-blue eyes and a profusion of light golden hair. Grandfather's remark, that Theodora was "a noble-hearted child," came back to me with my first glance at her.

Two smaller girls, who frequently left their chairs, to wait on the table, were sitting at grandmother's left hand; girls with brown eyes, brown hair, and rosy faces, one larger than the other; these were Ellen and Wealthy.

"They don't look much alike," said grandmother, looking at us all, over her glasses. "One never would mistrust they were cousins."

The old gentleman contemplated us kindly. "Only their noses," said he. "Their noses are somewhat alike."

Grandmother looked again, *through* her glasses this time.

"So they are!" cried she. "They've all got your nose, Joseph;" and the old lady laughed; and we all laughed a little oddly and looked at grandfather and laughed again. I think we felt a little better acquainted after that; we had, at least, a nose in common. But even our laughter that evening was distrait, or seemed to me so, as if shadowed by something sad.

As evening drew on, we all, save Halstead, gathered

in the front sitting-room without lights; for the windows were open; and there was a hazy moon. Theodora sat at one window, looking off upon the lake; while Ellen slowly and rather imperfectly played tunes on a melodeon, lively tunes, I believe, but the old instrument seemed to me to be weeping and wailing to us under a mask of pretended music. Beyond doubt I was a little homesick and tired from my journey; and after a time grandmother lighted a candle to show me the way up-stairs to bed. I remember feeling disappointed when she told me that I was to sleep with Halstead. The latter had come in and followed us up-stairs. He seemed surprised at finding me in his room.

"Thought you was going to roost with Ad," said he. "Heard the old gent say so. Guess Ad has been whining to the grandmarm not to have you. He is a regular old Betty. 'Fraid you'll upset some of his precious gimcracks."

"What are they?" I asked.

"Don't know much about them. I don't go near him, and he keeps his door fastened. Lets Doad and Nell in once in awhile. No admittance to me.

"Hold on a bit!" he exclaimed, suddenly. "Don't sit down on the side o' the bed just yet. There's (feeling under the bed-clothes) something soft in there. Here 'tis (drawing out half a large apple pie). Have a piece?"

Not liking to commit myself to pie under such dubious circumstances, I said that I guessed not. Halstead began eating it without further ceremony.

"I always want a luncheon before I go to bed," he explained, between mouthfuls. "The old folks think it's hurtful to eat and go right to sleep. I don't; and I generally manage to get a bite stowed away during the day."

I inquired how he managed it.

"Oh, watch my chance at the cupboard. 'Bout

three o'clock in the afternoon is a pretty good time. Women-folks all in the sitting-room then."

While Halstead was finishing the pie, I got into bed, taking the farther side. There was a shockingly hard lump under my back and after trying in vain to adapt myself to it, I asked Halstead if he knew what it was.

"Oh! I forgot that," said he; and coming round, he made another investigation in the straw bed and took out an old pistol, a very large, long one.

"It is loaded!" I exclaimed, for I caught sight of the bright brass cap.

"Course 'tis," said he. "What's the good of a pistol, if you don't load it? I had a pair. They're hoss pistols. But the old gent don't 'prove of pistols. He nabbed the other one. I have to keep this one hid."

"I should think they would find it when they make the bed," said I.

"Oh, the grandmarm don't stir the straw very often. She's kind o' fat. It tires her, I expect. After she's stirred it once, I know I'm safe to put things in there for quite a spell."

After secreting the pistol in the leg of an old boot, Halstead came to bed, and was asleep in a few moments. Falling asleep almost as soon as he touched the bed was one of his peculiarities. I, too, was soon asleep.

CHAPTER II

WHITE SUNDAY

'Tis Nature's own bright Whitsuntide,
The bloom of apple-trees.
The orchards stand like huge bouquets
And o'er them hum the bees.

MY dreams that first night at the old farm were many and disturbing; and I waked in the morning with a resentful recollection that I had received not a few hard knocks; but as everything was quiet, I dismissed the impression; for I had yet to learn that my new bed-fellow was a spasmodic kicker in his sleep of great range and power.

Erelong grandmother knocked at our chamber door and called us. Halstead hastily opened his eyes and rose, as suddenly as he had fallen asleep, without even a preliminary yawn.

"Sunday, isn't it?" said he, as he dressed. "But we don't have to go to church to-day. It's the Elder's turn to preach at Stoneham; he only comes here half the time."

After breakfast and after family prayers, Addison, Halstead and I went out to the garden and there was some effort at a conversation about blue-birds, a pair of which were building in a box on a pole which had been set up in the garden wall. But we did not yet feel much acquainted; Addison soon went back toward the house; Halstead sauntered off among the apple trees in the orchard, and gradually approached the wall near the road; then with a swift glance about

him, he sprang over and crouched out of sight behind it.

It occurred to me that he was doing this to initiate a frolic; and after waiting for a few moments, I drew near the place and peeped over. But he was not hidden there. Immediately I espied him down the road, evidently stealing away.

White Sunday, indeed! The orchard was a sunlit wilderness of pink and white blossoms. Every breath of the breeze shook off showers of them. The ground grew white beneath the trees. The garden was bordered with hedges of currant bushes; and within them stood a regiment of bare bean-poles in line. On the upper side was a bee-house, also a long row of grape trellises, covered with dry vines, showing here and there a large, pale green bud.

Presently Theodora came out.

"Alone, cousin?" she asked. "Where are the other boys?"

I told her that Addison had gone into the house.

"And Halstead?"

I replied that he was in the orchard a few minutes ago.

"He's gone now," said she, glancing through the trees. "Let's go find Addison."

No long search was necessary. She led the way directly up-stairs to his room and tapped at the door. There was a moment's skurry inside and a voice said, "Who's there?"

"Doad," — with a smile to me.

The key turned and Addison looked out.

"I have brought our new cousin," she said. "Can we come in?"

"Yes," said he, hesitantly, with a backward glance into the room. "Come in. Halse isn't there, is he?"

"No, Halse has gone, again," said Theodora.

They looked at each other significantly. Addison then opened the door and bustled about, clearing out

chairs for us The room seemed filled with things. On one side there was a great cupboard, stuffed, in a helter-skelter way, with books, papers and magazines. Farther along stood a bureau upon the top of which were set several bottles. A hat-tree in the corner had, perched upon it, a stuffed crow, a hawk and a blue jay with bright glass eyes. A rough shelf had been put up along one end, on which lay many glistening stones of all sorts and sizes; and on the bed was a large book, open to some cuts of birds.

"Naughty boy!" exclaimed Theodora, pointing to several loose feathers on the bed and on the floor. "What did you promise me?"

Addison reddened.

"No, I will not hush it up!" cried Theodora. "You deserve to be exposed! A youth who breaks his promises! You shall show us what you've been doing. I know where you have hidden it!" Before he could hinder her, she threw back the pillow and lo! more feathers and a small white and black bird! "Ah-ha, sir!" she exclaimed. "Didn't you say that you would not 'mount' another bird, Sunday?"

"Yes, I did, I own I did," said Addison. "But I only got this bobolink last night. He would spoil, if I let him go till Monday. Besides, I shall have to work then. And (holding him up) he's such a little beauty that I couldn't bear to lose him."

This last appeal disarmed Theodora. "We will pass it over this time," she said; "but (lowering her voice) you must not 'stuff' birds, Sunday. Yet now that you've broken the Commandment in your heart, by beginning, perhaps you might as well finish it. So we will both go off and let you get through with your wickedness as soon as you can."

"Addison is a real good cousin," Theodora said to me, apologetically, as we returned to the orchard. "He is one of the nicest boys I ever saw. He almost never gets angry, and always speaks in a gentlemanly

way to grandfather and grandmother; and he is real good to us girls, whenever we have anything hard to do, or want to make flower boxes, or spade up our flower beds. He knows the different kinds of rocks and trees and flowers, and the birds, too, and all about their nests and where they go winters. Uncle William, you know, was a teacher, the preceptor of an Academy; he understood botany and mineralogy and taught Ad when he was a little boy. Addison means to get a college education, if he can make his way to do it.

"I should like to get a good education, too," Theodora added after awhile. "Have you any plans of your own?"

I replied that I had no plans as yet; but that I, too, would like to attend school.

"We all go to the district school here," said Theodora, "and we can learn a good deal, if we study well. But I should like to go to a more advanced school when I get a little older, so that I could be a teacher myself, perhaps; though I would rather be something else than a teacher," she added.

"What is that?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't quite like to tell you that just yet," she said.

"I am going to show you the good apple trees," she continued, and led the way through the orchard. "These three great ones, here below the garden wall, are Orange Speck trees; they are real nice apples for winter; and there is the Gilliflower tree. Over here is the Early Sweet Bough; and that big one is the August Sweeting; and out there are the three August Pippins. All those away down there toward the road are Baldwins and Greenings. Those two by the lane wall are None Such trees. Out there by the corn-field wall are four Sweet Harvey trees and next below them, two Georgianas. I learned all their names last year. But this one here by the currant bushes is a

Sops-in-wine. Oh, they are so good! and they get ripe early, too, and so do the August Pippins and the Harveys and the August Sweetings; they are all nice. Those small trees just below the barnyard fence are pears, Bartlett pears, luscious ones! and those vines on the trellises are the Isabella and Concord grapes; some years grapes don't get ripe up here in Maine; but they did last year, pretty ripe, in October. Grandfather carried some of them to the County Fair and lots of the apples; he had over forty different kinds of fruit on exhibition. We girls went with him and placed the apples and pears and the grapes on plates, in the Fair building. You will go with us this year, I suppose.

"All this ground here is planted to beets and carrots and turnips. You mustn't step on it," my pleasant-voiced cousin admonished me. "And we will not go up very close to that little shed there. That is the bee-house. See all those hives! The bees will sometimes sting any one they don't know. Ad isn't afraid of them; I am not much afraid; they have never stung me. They sting Halstead like sport, if he goes up in front of the hives. Grandfather puts on a veil and some gloves and takes them off the apple tree limbs, when they swarm. Ellen is afraid of them, too; but Wealthy will go up and sit right down in her little chair, close by that biggest, old, dark-colored hive. There's an enormous swarm in that hive; and they send out two or three young swarms every year; that is one of them in the white, tall hive there at the end of the shed.

"Last year robber bees came out of the woods and attacked that hive with the red cap-piece on it. Ad watched them all through one day and threw hot water on the robbers. You'll see lots of excitement here when a swarm comes out and grandfather has to hive them. They got fifty cents a pound for the honey one year; but it isn't so high now. In the winter the

hives stand right out in the cold and snowdrifts. In February, last winter, the drift in front of the shed was higher than the shed itself. Grandfather stops up the holes into the hives, that's all; and in March, before the snow is gone, the bees sometimes come out and get the honey-sap on the birch and maple logs, when the men-folks are working up the big wood-pile in front of the wood-shed."

Ellen and Wealthy saw us talking by the bee-house, and approached the garden gate. "Come down here, girls, and get acquainted with our new cousin," Theodora called to them.

"Don't say much to them at first," she continued to me in a lower tone. "They are bashful."

Being in much the same case, I looked another way while the two girls joined us, Theodora having for the moment directed my attention to a tremendously large queen bumble-bee which came booming along the ground and began burrowing in a little heap of dry grass.

"Halstead says those big bumble-bees are the kings," Wealthy ventured to remark.

"Well, that is not right," said Ellen. "For Ad says they are the queens."

Theodora looked at me and laughed. "You see Ad's word is law," she said. "But now I want to show you Gram's geese."

We climbed the garden wall and went around a large shed which joined the "west barn" and then down into a little hollow behind it, where a rill from a spring had been dammed to form a goose-pond, fifty or sixty feet across. Near by the pond, in the edge of a potato field, we found the geese, seven of them and a gander, which latter extended an aquatic, pink beak and hissed his displeasure at our approach. "Go back, Job!" Theodora said to him; Wealthy stepped to the rear of the others, being still a little afraid of "Job." He was a grievous biter, Theodora

informed me, and had bitten her several times, till she had given him a switching for it.

"Two old geese are sitting on eggs in a goose-house, under the shed, near the barn," Ellen said. "That's what makes Job so valiant. It's most time for them to hatch the goslings; Gram has given us strict orders not to go nigh them."

My new cousins, having undertaken to show me the sights of the farm, conducted me next to the large old barns, now empty of hay, disclosing yawning hay bays, weathered brown beams and grain scaffolds.

On this Sabbath morning, the cobwebbed roofs were vocal with the twitterings of many tireless, happy swallows, whose mud nests were placed against the dusty ribs and rafters. Three comma-shaped swallow-holes in the gable gave them access to the inside, where for two generations of men they had found a safe breeding-place. Less safe and less fortunate were the eaves swallows, a row of whose mud nests was placed along one side of the barn, beneath the eaves without; for wind, sun and rain often caused their nests to fall; crows, too, at times stole up and plundered them; and weasels playing along the margin of the roof, had been known to throttle the fledglings.

"He must go and see the 'Little Sea,'" said Ellen.

"Yes, cousin," Theodora said, "you have no doubt heard of the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea and the Mediterranean Sea; but up here at Gramp's we have a new sea that no geographer has yet put down on the map. It isn't every day that anybody can discover a new sea, you know."

Ellen and Wealthy led the way across the fields toward the east side of the farm; we crossed the road and descended through a wide field of grass land, and came to a broad stone wall, extending for near half a mile betwixt the fields and the pastures. Here grew a long, irregular row of wild red cherry trees and black cherry trees, now just past the season of bloom.

"The cherries off some of these trees are fine to eat," Theodora remarked as we stood on the wall and looked about. "This one here is Gramp's tree," she said. "Those off this tree are nearly half as large as the 'tame' cherries; and this one by the rock is my tree; and those out by the pine stump are Ellen's and Wealthy's. Halstead claims a whole row of those higher up; he talks large if any of us rob his trees; but the birds get the most of them. Ad thinks they are not really fit to eat and says there is danger in swallowing the stones. We have enough of the large, tame cherries, too, all through July and until the first of August. Those trees that you saw along the barnyard fence of the north barn are the tame cherry trees. The black cherries do not get ripe till later; October is the month for them. They are nice when real glossy black and ripe, after the first frosts. The trees are just loaded down with them, sometimes; and right there, by that double tree, is where Uncle Henry and Uncle Edmund (your father) saw a bear in the tree, or in a tree that stood there then; it may not be the same one, but it was a cherry tree. The bear was up in the tree, getting cherries. He would reach out and pull in the branches with his paws, and then draw the little twigs, all covered with cherries, through his big mouth and scrape off a lot at once. That was what he was doing there, and he had broken the top of the tree half off. The boys heard the green limbs creaking and cracking, and the tree shaking under the bear's weight. So they stole up and stood on the wall to look; and pretty soon they saw his black hair amongst the leaves; but the bear was so busy eating cherries that he did not notice them. They had no gun, so they each picked up a good big stone and both threw at once; and one of them hit the bear, thump, on his back! It took him by surprise, I expect, and his mouth being so full of leaves and cherries, he sucked some of them down the wrong way, maybe; for they said

the old fellow gave an awful cough! — and then started to slide down the tree. At that they both turned and ran, like sport, for the house; for they imagined the old bear meant to pay them back for that stone that had hit him."

"Did the bear chase them?" I cried.

"I rather think not," replied Theodora. "I didn't hear that he did."

"Are there bears around here now?" I inquired.

"Not many; they don't come around the buildings now as they did when our fathers were boys."

"Old 'Three-Legs' comes into the sheep-pasture after the sheep," said Ellen.

"Yes, and Halstead says he saw him when he was looking for the cows, one night this spring," said Wealthy.

"Is 'Three-Legs' a bear?" I asked, greatly interested.

"Yes, a very bold, cunning old bear that lost his right foot in a trap years ago," Ellen explained. "Halstead says he saw him about a month ago."

"Halstead sees lots of bears," said Theodora, laughing. "I suppose there are a few about, yet," she added. "They come down out of the Great Woods once in awhile. But Gramp says there is no danger in our going out in the pastures and the woods around the farm, except perhaps a little while in the spring, when they first come out of their winter dens and are very gaunt and hungry."

"Gram doesn't like to have us go off into the woods," said Wealthy.

"I have been all over the pasture and through all these woods here, and those on the west side of the farm; and once, last November, I went up to Mud Pond in the Great Woods, with Ad, after beaver-lily root, and I never saw any bears," said Theodora.

"Nor I either," said Ellen. "But Gram never likes to have us go off far."

"Where is the 'Great Woods'?" I asked.

"Oh, away off to the north and the west of the farms," replied Theodora. "Most anything may come out of the Great Woods! It's a realm of mystery. It extends off to the White Mountains and to the Lakes and toward Canada. There are deer and moose in it, and 'lucivees.'"

"What are they?" I asked.

"It's a kind of big woods cat," Ellen said. "Some hunters brought out three which they had shot, last winter; they were as large as dogs and had pretty little black tufts on their ears, and such great, round, silvery eyes and such paws, too, with toe-nails an inch long!"

"Addison thinks that there are valuable minerals up in the Great Woods," Theodora remarked; "silver and amethysts and tourmalines. The day he and I and Kate Edwards went after the beaver-lily root, we climbed part way up a high mountain and on the side of it Ad found rock crystals. Oh, such beautiful ones! as large as a pear. He says he is going to explore all those mountains, by and by."

"Are there mountains in the Great Woods?" I inquired.

"Yes, and ponds and brooks full of trout and I don't know what else. I would like to explore it myself. Addison said that some time, when the work is well along, we can get up a party and go up there, to explore and fish and camp out a week. Wouldn't that be fun?"

"But it isn't often that the work is well along," remarked Ellen. "There is always lots to do here."

"Well, now we must go down to the 'Little Sea,'" said Theodora; and we descended through the pasture, a large tract of grazing land, partly bushy, overgrown in many places by high, rank brakes, and at length came to a brook, running over a sandy bed. Here at a bend was an artificial pond, formed by a

dam, built of stones laid up in a broad wall across the course of the brook. In one place the wall was six or seven feet in height; and through a little sluice-way of planks, the water ran in a slender stream over the dam and fell into a pool below it. The pond was perhaps a hundred feet in length by forty or fifty in width; a part of the bottom was sandy and in one place it was over a boy's head in depth.

"This is the famous Little Sea," said Theodora. "Isn't it an extensive sheet of water?"

"Who built the dam?" I inquired.

"Oh, your father and mine and all the rest of our uncles, grandfather's first boys, when they were young."

"What did they build it for?" I asked.

"To wash the sheep. They hold the sheep under the stream of water where it falls over the sluice-way below the dam here," replied Ellen.

"And to learn to swim in," said Wealthy. "They used to swim here when they were boys; and Ad and Halstead come down here now, Saturday evenings, for a bath. Doad and Nell and I are going to have us some bathing suits and come down here, too, so that if ever we go to the seashore, we may know how to swim."

The older girls laughed indulgently at Wealthy for thus ingenuously informing me of their projects.

"Well, you needn't laugh," said Wealthy, coloring. "He's our cousin, isn't he?"

This made me feel so awkward that, to change the subject, I began skipping stones, and was very glad to have Ellen ask me whether I knew how to make "whistles." I did not. "I do," said she. "If you will lend me your pocket-knife, I will show you how."

"But it is Sunday, Nell," said Theodora, smiling.

"So 'tis!" exclaimed Ellen. "I forgot."

"I guess it need be no harm to make just one, now

you've spoken of it," said Theodora. So the knife being opened, I was instructed how to cut a stick of green osier, or maple, shape the end, cut and loosen the bark; and having slipped the bark off, how further to make the requisite notches, so that the hollow cylinder of bark being replaced, there would be a whistle of keen, shrill note.

This bit of sylvan handicraft having been explained to me, in detail, Theodora announced that it was time to return to the house. "Gram does not approve of our taking too long strolls on Sunday," said she. "But so long as we do right, I can see no harm in it. Besides, our new cousin had never seen the farm before and to-morrow he will have to go to work, I suppose."

"But there's lots more to show him," said Ellen. "He hasn't seen the house-leek rocks, nor the old cider mill, nor the artichoke flat, nor the sap-house, nor the colts."

"Nor the other trout brook where Ad caught the mink, nor the woodchuck wall, nor the bog where the big mud-turtle lives, nor the blackberry hill, nor 'the fort.' Why, he hasn't seen hardly anything, yet," Wealthy added.

"O well, he will have time to see it all, for he is going to live here, you know," said Theodora. "But now we really ought to go home, for we must help Gram get up the dinner, and it is past noon already, I think."

We took our way leisurely up through the fields where the wild strawberries were in bloom, great patches of them, half an acre in extent, white with the lowly blossoms. The girls carefully marked certain places, so as to know where to come early in July, when the grass was grown tall.

"Gramp does not quite like to have us come into the tall grass, after strawberries," Theodora remarked, "because we trample the grass down and make it

difficult to mow; but Gram always sends us out and sometimes goes herself."

"And when she goes, I tell you the grass has to catch it!" exclaimed Wealthy. "She just creeps along and crushes down a whole acre of it at one time!"

"Yes, Gramp scolded a little about it one day," said Ellen. "He came in at noon and said to grandma, 'Ruth Ann, I should think that the Millerites had been creeping through my east field.' He said that to tease her, because Gram doesn't approve of the Millerites at all.

"'Joseph,' said Gram, pretty short for her, 'I'm afraid your memory's failing you.'

"'What's my memory got to do with it?' said Gramp.

"'Didn't I put it in the bargain when I married you, that I should be allowed to go strawberrying in the hay fields just when I wanted to?' Gram said.

"At that, Gramp began to laugh and said, that if his memory was failing, there certainly was nothing the matter with grandma's memory; and he never said another word about the grass; so I guess he did make some such promise when they were married."

The girls went into the house; and feeling pretty warm from our walk, I lay down beneath one of the large old Balm o' Gileads. Addison came out of the sitting-room and asked where we had been. "I was going to ask you to go down to the 'Little Sea,'" he added, "for a swim before dinner. But if you have been down there and back, you would be too warm to go into the water; so I'll lend you a book to read."

He brought me from his room *Cudjo's Cave,* saying that the Old Squire and Gram might not consider it wholly proper reading for Sunday, but that it was his most interesting book, in the way of a story.

"Do you call grandfather the 'Old Squire'?" I asked.

"Yes, that is what the folks around here mostly call him," replied Addison. "So I do. It doesn't sound quite so childish as to be always saying grandfather, or grandpa.

"Of course," Addison continued, "we expect girls, or little boys, to say 'grandfather,' or 'gramp'; but we boys when we are out among other boys, have to say the 'Old Squire,' or the 'old man,' or else they would be laughing at us for milksops. It doesn't do for a boy to seem too childish, you know.

"But I never like the sound of 'the old man,'" Addison went on coaching me confidentially. "Sounds disrespectful and sort of rowdy. I don't like 'old gent,' either. But I sometimes speak of grandfather as the old gentleman and of grandmother, generally, as 'Gram.' So do the girls. She likes that, too; for some reason she doesn't like to be called grandmother very well. I guess it makes her feel too old. For fun I called her 'Ruth' one day. That is her given name, you know. She looked at me and laughed. 'Addison,' she exclaimed, 'you are getting to be quite a young man!'

"But I guess if the truth were known," Addison continued sapiently, "that no oldish people like to be called grandpa and grandma very well, till they get to be as much as eighty years old. Then they seem to enjoy it."

Grandmother provided but two meals on Sunday: breakfast at about eight in the morning, and dinner at three in the afternoon. Consequently we were sitting down to dinner, with very good appetites, judging the others by my own, when one seat was seen to be vacant.

"Where's Halstead?" the Old Squire asked.

There was an expectant hush; and again I saw Theodora and Addison glance across to each other. As no one seemed to know, nothing further was said. We were half through dinner, when the absent one

came quickly into the kitchen, looking very red and much heated. With a stealthy glance through the open door into the dining-room, he hastily bathed his face in cold water, then came in and took his place. His hair was wet, his collar limp, and altogether he looked like a boy fresh from a hot run.

"Where have you been, Halstead?" the Old Squire inquired.

"Up in the sheep pasture, sir," said Halstead promptly. "I can't make but forty-seven lambs, the way I count. There is one gone."

"A very sudden liking for shepherd life," remarked Addison in an undertone to Theodora.

"What made you run and heat yourself so?" Gram asked him.

"I was afraid I should be late to dinner," answered Halstead with a bold look, intended for a frank one.

Grandfather looked at him earnestly; but nothing more was said. We all felt uneasy. Dinner ended rather drearily.

In the evening Theodora read to us several chapters from *Dred,* Mrs. Stowe's novel. Anti-slavery books were then wellnigh sacred at the old farm. Almost any other work of fiction would hardly have been considered fit reading for Sunday.

CHAPTER III

MONDAY AT THE OLD FARM

"I SHALL expect you to work with us on the farm, 'Edmund,'" grandfather said to me after breakfast. "But you may have this forenoon, to look about and see the place. Enjoy yourself all you can."

The robins were singing blithely in the orchard. I went thither and I think it was four robins' nests which I found in as many different apple trees, one with three, two with four and one with five blue eggs. Is there anything prettier than the eggs of a robin, in the eyes of a boy?

As I climbed the orchard wall to cross the road, a milk snake was sunning on the loose stones among the raspberry bushes, the first I had ever seen; and I bear witness that the ancestral antipathy to the serpent leaped within me instantly. I beat his head without remorse, ay, pounded his tail, too, which wriggled prodigiously, and chopped his body to pieces with sharp stones.

This sorry victory achieved, I set off across the fields to the west pasture and thence descended to the west brook, where I saw several trout in a deep hole beneath the decayed logs of a former bridge. With a mental resolve to come here fishing, as soon as I could procure a hook and line, I continued onward through a low, swampy tract overgrown with black alder and at length reached the "colt pasture," upon a cleared hill. Here a handsome black colt, along with a sorrel and a white one, was feeding, and at once

came racing to meet me, in the hope of a nib of provender, or salt. Continuing my voyage of discovery, I came to a tract of woodland beyond the pasture through which a cart road led to a clearing where there was a small old house, deserted, and also a small barn. This, as I had yet to learn, was the "Aunt Hannah lot," an appendage of the farm, which had come into grandfather's possession from a sister, my great-aunt of that name. Save a field of oats, the land here was allowed to lie in grass and remain otherwise uncultivated. Beyond this small outlying farm, there was a dense body of woodland, which I did not then attempt to penetrate, but made a circuit to the northward through pasture land and young wood for half a mile or more, and by and by crossed the road, looking along which to the northwest, I could see the farmhouses of several of our neighbors.

Still farther around to the north rose a bold, rocky, cleared hill which I concluded was the sheep pasture. In a wet run along the foot of the hill was a stretch of what looked to be low, reddish, brushy grass, which I ascertained later was the "cranberry swale."

Beyond it to the east, a long field curved around the foot of the sheep pasture; and on the far side of this field there was woodland again, descending first to the valley of the east brook where lay the "Little Sea," then ascending a rugged hill.

A boy, like a bee, must needs take his bearings before he can feel quite at home in a new place. I crossed the valley and climbed the wooded hill beyond, a distance of nearly a mile and a half from the farmhouse. Formerly there had been a grand growth of pine here; and there were still a few pine trees. Numbers of the old stumps and stubs were of great size. This rugged ridge bore the name of Pine Hill. From the summit I gained a fine view of the country around, with its farms and forest tracts, and of the Pennesseewassee stretching away to the southward; also of the

White Mountains in the northwest; while on the other side of the hill to the east and southeast, lay an extensive bog and another smaller lake, or pond, known as North Pond.

For half an hour or more I sat upon a pine stump and pored over the geography of the district with much boyish interest, noting various hills, farmhouses and other landmarks concerning which I determined to inquire of Addison.

At length, beginning to feel hungry and bethinking myself that it must be getting toward noon, I descended from my perch of observation, and made my way homeward, although it did not seem very much like home to me as yet. The tramp had done me good in the way of satisfying my " bump of location."

Reaching the house in advance of the noon hour, I went out with Theodora to see the eaves swallows again. We counted fifty-seven nests in a row, each resembling very much a dry cocoanut shell, with a swallow's head looking out at a little hole on the upper side. Dora pointed out the nest of one pair which had experienced much ill luck. Three times the nest had fallen. No sooner would they finish it and have an egg or two, than down it would fall on the stones below. But their misfortunes had finally taught the little architects wisdom. They brought hair from the barnyard and mixed it with their mud, after the manner of mortar, and so built a nest which successfully adhered.

All this Theodora told me as we stood watching them, coming and going with cheery, ceaseless twitterings.

" And I think they've got a kind of reason about such things," Theodora added with a certain tone of candid concession. " Although Gram says it is only instinct. She doesn't like to have any one say that animals or birds reason; she thinks it isn't Scriptural."

Just then Ellen came out with the dinner-horn which,

after several dissonant efforts, she succeeded in sounding, to call the Old Squire and the boys from the field. Theodora and I were so greatly amused at the odd sound that we burst out laughing; and Ellen, hearing us, was a good deal mortified. "I don't care!" she exclaimed. "It goes awfully hard; I haven't got breath enough to quite 'fill' it; and my lip isn't hard enough. Ad says it takes practice to get up a lip for horn blowing."

Theodora tried it, and elicited a horrible blare. I did not succeed much better; something seemed to be lacking in my lip, or my lungs. It required a tremendous head of wind to make the old tube vibrate; at last, I got it started a-roaring and made the whole countryside hideous with an outlandish sort of blast. Theodora begged of me to desist.

"We shall have the neighborhood aroused and coming to see what the matter is," she said. I was so much elated with my success, however, that I blew a final roar; and just then Addison, Halstead, grandfather and two hired men came upon the scene, over the wall from the field side.

"What on earth are you trying to do with that horn?" Halstead called out. "Do you think we are deaf? I never heard such a noise!"

"It is only our new cousin getting up his lip," said Ellen, scarcely able to speak for laughing.

Grandfather told me that if they ever organized a brass band thereabout, I should have the big French horn to play, for I seemed to have the makings of a tremendous lip. All these little incidents of my first few days at the farm are enduringly fixed in my memory.

The day proved a warm one; and after dinner I went into the front sitting-room and looked at the old family pictures: grandfather's father and mother in silhouette, General Scott's triumphant entry into the city of Mexico, Jesus disputing with the Doctors,

Martin Luther, George Washington and several daguerreotypes of my uncles and aunts, framed and hung on the wall. Next I read the battle parts of a new history of the War, by Abbott.

Erelong grandfather came in for a nap on the lounge; and I found that Addison and Halstead were hitching up old Sol and loading bags of corn into the farm wagon, to go to mill. They told me that the grist mill was three miles distant and invited me to go along with them. We set off immediately, all three of us sitting on the seat, in front of the bags. Halstead wanted to drive; but Addison had taken possession of the reins and kept them, although Halstead secured the whip and occasionally touched up the horse, contrary to Addison's wishes; for it proved a very hilly road. First we descended from the ridge on which the home farm is located, crossed the meadow, then ascended another long ridge whence a good view was afforded of several ponds, and of the White Mountains in the northwest.

Descending from this height of land to the westward for half a mile, we came to the mill, in the valley of another large brook. It was a weathered, saddle-back old structure, situated at the foot of a huge dam, built of rough stones, like a farm wall across the brook, and holding back a considerable pond. A rickety sluice-way led the water down upon the water-wheel beneath the mill floor.

When we arrived there was no one stirring about the mill; but we had no more than driven up and hitched old Sol to a post, when two boys came out from a small red house, a little way along the road, where lived the miller, whose name was Harland.

"There come Jock and George," said Addison. "Maybe the old man isn't at home to-day.

"Where's your father?" he called out, as the boys drew near.

"Gone to the village," replied the larger of the two,

who was apparently thirteen or fourteen years of age.

"We want to get a grist ground," Addison said to them.

"What is it?" they both asked.

"Corn," replied Ad.

"If it's only corn, we can grind it," they said. "Take it in so we can toll it. Pa said we could grind corn, or oats and pease; but he won't let us grind wheat, yet, for that has to be bolted."

We carried the bags into the mill; there were three of them, each containing two bushels of corn; and meantime the two young millers brought along a half-bushel measure and a two-quart measure.

"It's two quarts toll to the bushel, ye know," said Jonathan, the elder of the two. "So I must have two two-quart measurefuls out of every bag." He proceeded to untie the bags and toll them, dipping out a heaped measureful.

"Here, here," said Addison, "you must *strict* those measures with a square; you're getting a good pint too much on every one."

"All right," they assented, and producing a piece of straight-edged board, *stricted* them.

"Have to watch these millers a little," Addison remarked. "And I guess, Jock, you had better not toll all the bags till you see whether there's water enough to grind all of it."

"O, there's water enough," said they. "There's a whole damful."

They then poured the first bagful into the hopper over the mill-stones, and went to hoist the gate. It was a very primitive, worn piece of mechanism, and hoisting it proved a difficult task. Addison and Halstead went to help them. At length they heaved the gate up; the water-wheel began to turn and the other gear to revolve, making a tremendous noise. I climbed down beneath the mill, at the lower end, to see the

water-wheel operate. The wheel and big mill post turned ponderously around, wabbling somewhat and creaking ominously. By the time I went back into the mill, above, the first bagful of corn was nearly ground into yellow meal, which came out of the stones into the meal-box quite hot from the molinary process. Addison was dipping the meal out and putting it up in the empty bag.

"Is it fine enough?" Jock called out. "I can drop the stone a little, if ye say so. We will grind it just as ye want it."

Presently something went through the millstones that made an odd noise; and the young miller, George, accused Halstead of throwing a pebble into the hopper. They had a dispute about it, and George complained that such a trick might spoil the millstones.

Another bagful was poured into the hopper and ground out; and then Addison and I brought along the third bagful.

"Hold on there," said Jock. "I haven't tolled that bag."

We thought that he had tolled it.

"No," said both Jock and George. "You said not to toll that last bag till we saw whether there was water enough to grind it."

"But you declared that there was water enough, and tolled it!" cried Halstead.

Addison and I could not say positively whether they had tolled it or not; and they appeared to think that it had not been tolled. The point was argued for some moments; finally it was agreed to compromise on it and let them have one measure of toll out of it. So there was two quarts of loss or gain, whichever party was in error.

When the last bagful was nearly ground and the hopper empty, all save a pint or so, Jock and George ran to shut the gate and stop the mill.

"Hold on!" cried Addison. "That isn't fair.

There's two quarts in the stones yet; we shall lose all that on top of toll."

"But we must shut down before the corn is all through the stones!" cried Jock, "or they'll get to running fast and grind themselves. 'Twon't do to let them get to running fast, with no corn in."

"Well, don't be in such haste about it," urged Addison. "Wait a bit till our grist is nearer out."

They waited a few moments, but were very uneasy about the stones, and soon after the last kernels of corn had disappeared from the hopper, they pulled the ash pin to let the gate fall. It was then discovered that from some cause the gate would not drop. The boys thumped and rattled it. But the water still poured down on the wheel. By this time the meal had run nearly all out of the millstones and they revolved more rapidly. The young millers were now a good deal alarmed, and, running out, climbed up the dam and looked into the flume, to see what was the matter with their gate.

"It's an old shingle-bolt!" shouted Jock, "that's floated down the pond! It's got sucked in under the gate and holds it up! Fetch the pike-pole, George!"

George ran to get the pike-pole; and for some moments they tried to push, or pull, the block out. But it was wedged fast and the in-draught of the water held it firmly in the aperture beneath the gate. It was impossible to reach it with anything save the pike-pole, for the water in the flume over it was four or five feet deep.

Meantime the old mill was running amuck inside. The water-wheel was turning swiftly and the millstone was whirling like a buzz saw. After every few seconds we could hear it graze down against the nether stone with an ugly sound; and then there would fly up a powerful odor of ozone.

Jock and George, finding that they could not shut

the gate, came rushing into the mill again in still greater excitement.

"The stones'll be spoilt!" Jock exclaimed. "We must get them to grinding something."

He ran to the little bin of about a bushel of corn where the old miller kept his toll and where they had put the toll from our bags. This was hurriedly flung into the hopper and came through into the meal-box at a great rate. It checked the speed in a measure, however, and we took breath a little.

"You had better keep the mill grinding till the pond runs out," Addison advised.

"I would," replied Jock, "but that's all the grain there is here."

It was evident that the mill must be kept grinding at something or other, or it would grind itself. It would not answer to put in pebbles. Ad suggested chips from the wood yard; and George set off on a run to fetch a basketful of chips to grind; but while he was gone, Jock bethought himself of a pile of corn-cobs in one corner of the mill; and we hastily gathered up a half-bushel measureful. They were old dry cobs and very hard.

"Not too fast with them!" Jock cautioned. "Only a few at a time!"

By throwing in a handful at a time, we reduced the speed of the stones gradually, and then suddenly piling in a peck or more slowed it down till it fairly came to a standstill, glutted with cobs. The water-wheel had stopped, although the water was still pouring down upon it; and in that condition we left it, with the miller boys peeping about the flume and the mill-stones and exclaiming to each other, "What'll Pa say when he gets back!"

That was my first experience in active milling business, and it made a profound impression on my mind.

But we were not yet home with our grist, by a great deal! Halstead had resented it because he had not

been able to drive the horse on the outward trip. While Addison and I were throwing in the last bag, he jumped into the wagon and secured the reins. Not to have trouble, Addison said nothing against his driving; and we two walked up the long hill from the mill, behind the wagon. Reaching the summit, we got in and Halstead started to drive down the hill on the other side. As I was a stranger, he wished me to think that he was a fine driver and told me of some of his exploits managing horses. "There's no use," said he, "in letting a horse lag along down hill the way the old mossbacks do around here. They are scared to death if a horse does more than walk. Ad won't let a horse trot a single step on a hill, but mopes and mopes along. I've seen horses driven in places where they know something, and I know how a horse ought to go."

In earnest of this opinion, he touched old Sol up, and we went down the first hill at such a pace, that I was glad to hold to the seat.

"You had better be careful," said Addison. "Drive with more sense, if you are going to drive at all — which you are not fit to do," he added.

Out of bravado, I suppose, Halstead again applied the whip and we trundled along down the next hill at a still more rapid rate.

"Now Halse, if you are going to drive like this, just haul up and let me walk," Addison remonstrated, more seriously. But Halstead would not stop, and, touching the horse again, set off down the last hill before reaching the meadow, at an equally smart pace.

It is likely, however, that we might have got down without accident; but the road, like most country roads, was rather narrow and as we drew near the foot of the hill, we suddenly espied a horse and wagon emerging from amongst the alder clumps through which the road across the meadow wound its way, and saw, too, that a woman was driving.

"Give us half the road!" Halstead shouted. But the woman seemed confused, as not knowing on which side of the road to turn out; she hesitated and stopped in the middle of the road.

Perceiving that we were in danger of a collision, Addison snatched the reins and turned our horse clean out into the alders; and the off hind wheel coming violently in contact with an old log, the transient bolt of the wagon broke. The forward wheels parted from the wagon body, and we were all pitched out into the brush, in a heap together. The bags of meal came on top of us.

Halstead had his nose scratched; I sprained one of my thumbs; and we were all three shaken up smartly. Addison, however, regained his feet in time to capture old Sol who was making off with the forward wheels.

The woman sat in her wagon and looked quite dazed by the spectacle of boys and bags tumbling over each other.

"Dear hearts," said she, "are you all killed?"

"Why didn't you turn out!" exclaimed Halstead.

"I know I ought to," said the woman, humbly, "but you came down the hill so fast, I thought your horse had run away. I was so scared I didn't know what to do."

"You were not at all to blame, madam," said Ad. "It was we who were at fault. We were driving too fast."

We contrived at length to patch up the wagon by tying the "rocker" of the wagon body to the forward axle with the rope halter, and reloading our meal bags, drove slowly home without further incident. Addison, having captured the reins, retained possession of them, much to my mental relief. Halstead laid the blame alternately to the woman and to Addison's effort to grab the reins. "Now I suppose

you will go home and tell the old gent that I did it!" he added bitterly. "If you had let the reins alone, I should have got along all right."

Addison did not reply to this accusation, except to say that he was thankful our necks were not broken. As we drove into the carriage house, Gramp came out and seeing the rope in so odd a position, asked what was the matter.

"The transient bolt broke, coming down the Sylvester hill," Addison replied. "It was badly worn, I see. If you think it best, sir, I will take it to the blacksmith's shop after work, to-morrow."

"Very well," Gramp assented; and that was all there was said about the accident.

It had been a long day, but my new experiences were far from being over. A boy can live a great deal during one long May day. After supper I went out to assist the boys with the farm chores, and took my first lesson, milking a cow and feeding the calves. The latter were kept tied in the long, now empty hay-bay of the east barn. I had already been there to see them; there were ten of them, tied with ropes and neck-straps along the sides of the bay to keep them apart.

Weaned, or unweaned, they were fed but twice a day, and from six o'clock in the morning to six at night is a very long time for a young and rapidly growing calf to wait between meals. As early as four o'clock in the afternoon those calves would begin to bawl for their supper; by half past five one could hardly make himself heard in the barn, unless there chanced to fall a moment's silence, while the hungry little fellows were all catching breath to bleat again. Then they would all peal forth together on ten different keys.

How those old bare walls and high beams would resound! Blar-r-rt! Blaw-ar-ar-ah-ahrt! Blah-ah-aht! Bul-ar-ah-ahrt! There were eager little altos, soaring sopranos, high and importunate tenors that

rose to the roof and drowned the twitter of the happy barn-swallows.

Addison, Halstead, Theodora and Ellen, who had come to the farm before me, knew all the calves by sight and had named them. There was Little Star, Phil Sheridan, Black Betty, Hooker, Nut, Little Dagon, Andy Johnson and Babe. I do not recollect the others, but have particular reason to remember Little Dagon.

At the time I made the acquaintance of this broad-headed Hereford calf he was five weeks old, and the soft buds of his horns were beginning to show in the curly hair of his forehead. His color was dark red, except for a milk-white face, two white feet, a white tassel on his tail, and a little belt of white under his body. Grandfather had unexpectedly sold this calf's mother, a fine, large, line-backed cow, to a friend at the village on that very morning.

The old gentleman kindly showed me how to milk and how to hold the pail, then gave me a milking-stool and sat me down to milk "Lily-Whiteface." She was not a hard milker, but it did seem to me that after I had extracted about three quarts of milk, my hands were getting paralyzed. Halstead, who sat milking a few yards away, had, meanwhile, been adding to my troubles by squirting streams of milk at my left ear, till Gramp caught him in the act and bade him desist.

The old gentleman presently finished with his two cows, and went away with his buckets of milk toward the house. Then, with soothing guile which I had not yet learned to detect, Halstead offered to finish milking my cow for me. I was glad to accept the offer. My untrained fingers were aching so painfully that I could now hardly draw a drop of milk. My knees, too, were tremulous from my efforts to clasp the pail between them.

"It made mine ache at first," said Halstead with

comforting sympathy as he sat down on my stool and took my pail between his knees. I stood gratefully by, and after a few moments he looked up and said, "While I finish milking your cow, you run over to the west barn and get Little Dagon. He is dreadfully hungry. His mother was sold this morning, and we have got to teach him to drink his milk to-night."

"He had better not try to lead that calf!" Addison called out from his stool, at a distance.

"Why not?" Halse exclaimed. "Oh, he can lead him all right. All he has to do is to untie the calf's rope from the staple in the barn post. He will come right along, himself."

It seemed very simple as Halstead put it, and I started off at once. Addison said no more; he gave me an odd look as I hastened past him, but I hardly noticed it at the time.

Little Dagon was making the rafters re-echo as I entered the bay. When he saw me, he jumped to the end of his rope and fairly went into the air. He had sucked the bow-knot of the rope till it was as slippery as if soaped, and when I strove to untie it, he grabbed my hands in his mouth. At length I untied him and then with a clatter on the loose boards, we went out of the hay-bay, pranced across the barn floor and out at the great doors.

No one has ever explained satisfactorily what that instinct is which guides young animals unerringly back home, or in the direction of their kin. Hungry Little Dagon, tied up in the barn, could hardly have noted with eyes or ears the direction in which his mother had been driven away; but as soon as we were out at the barn doors, instead of rushing to the other barn, where he had hitherto found his mother night and morning, the rampant little beast headed straight past the house and down the lane to take the road for the village.

A man could have held him without difficulty. I

was in my thirteenth year, and may have weighed seventy-five pounds, but did not have weight enough. In the exuberance of his young muscle, Little Dagon erected his tail and made a bolt in the direction which instinct bade him take.

My one chance of holding him would have been to noose the rope about his nose and seize him close by the neck, at the start; but this I did not understand, and, in fact, had no time to study the problem. I clung to the end of the rope, and away we went. I was not leading the calf. Little Dagon was leading me. First I took one long step, and then such strides as I had never made before.

Halstead and Addison had jumped up from their milking-stools and come to the barn-yard bars. "Hold him! Hold him!" they shouted. "Don't let him get away!"

Grandfather, too, had now come to the kitchen door. "Hold him! Hold that calf!" he called out, and I clung to the knot in the end of the rope, with determination.

In a moment Little Dagon was towing me down the long lane to the road. The gate stood open, and out we went into the highway, on the jump. There, however, the calf pulled up short, to smell the road. I tried to catch the strap round his neck and turn him back, but he seized my arm in his mouth to suck it; and being unused to calves, I was afraid he would bite me. When I attempted to lead him about, that eager impulse to find his mother again possessed him, and away he ran down the long orchard hill.

I do not now see how I contrived to hold on to the rope, but I remember thinking that if I let go Addison and Halstead would laugh at me, and that Gramp would blame me.

We raced down that long hill, my feet seeming hardly to touch the ground, and struck a level, sandy stretch at the foot of it. The sand felt queer to the

WHEN I LED LITTLE DAGON.

calf's feet, and he stopped to smell it. By this time I was badly out of breath, but I turned his head homeward and began towing him back. He sulked, but took a few steps with me. Then he gave a sudden wild prance into the air, headed round and started again. I could not hold him, and on we went, a long run this time, until we came to the bridge over the meadow brook. There the planks proved a new wonderment to the calf, and he pulled up to smell them.

Just then there appeared in the road ahead Theodora and "Aunt Olive Witham," a working woman, who came every spring and fall to help grandmother clean house and to do the year's spinning. Theodora had been to the Corners that evening, to summon her.

"Oh, help me stop him!" I panted. "For pity's sake, catch hold of this rope! He is running away with me! I can't hold him!"

Theodora edged across the bridge to bear a hand; but "Aunt Olive" knew calves, or thought she did.

"Boss-boss-boss!" she crooned to the calf, and extending her hand, walked straight to his head to get him by the ears. This may have been the proper thing to do, but it did not work well that time. Little Dagon suddenly looked up from his snuffing of the planks, and for some reason his young eyes distrusted "Aunt Olive."

He bounded aside and began again to run. I was clinging fast to the rope, and Aunt Olive and I collided. Aunt Olive, in truth, recoiled nearly off the end of the bridge; I was jerked onward. Little Dagon had learned that he could pull me, and I might as well have tried to hold a locomotive. Theodora ran a few steps after us, trying loyally to succor me. Aunt Olive stood endeavoring to recover her breath; ordinarily she was energy personified, but for the instant stood gasping.

Beyond the meadow there was a hill, and going up that hill I came very near mastering the calf; but

after a hard tussle he gained the top in spite of me and ran on, over descending ground, where the road passed through woodland. We were now fully a mile and a half from home. Thus far I had held on, but strength and breath were about gone. I was panting hard, and actually crying from mortification.

Now, however, I saw a horse drawing a light wagon coming along the road. A well-dressed elderly man was driving. I called out to him to aid me. If I had known who he was, I might have been less unceremonious. "Oh, help me stop him!" I cried. "Do help me stop him! I can't hold him!"

The stranger reined his horse half round across the road, and Little Dagon ran full against the horse's fore legs and stopped to sniff again. The elderly gentleman got out quickly.

"Did the calf run away with you, my son?" he asked, smiling at my heated and tearful appearance.

"Yes, sir," I replied, panting.

"Well, well, you have had a hot run, haven't you?" and he gave me several sympathetic pats on the shoulder. "How far have you come, all so fast?"

"I came from Grandpa S.'s," I replied, as steadily as I could, for I was sadly out of breath.

"Your grandfather is Joseph S.?" queried the elderly man.

"Yes, sir," I replied. "I have just come there to live."

"Ah, yes," commented my new acquaintance. "I know your grandpa very well. I am on my way to call on him. Now let's see. How shall we manage? Do you think that you could sit in the back part of my wagon and lead the calf, if I were to drive slowly?"

"I'm afraid he would pull me out!" I exclaimed.

"Not if we both hold the rope, I think," remarked the elderly man, still smiling broadly. "I will reach back with one hand and help you hold him."

After much pulling, hauling and manœuvring, Little Dagon was brought to the back of the wagon. I then sat in the rear, with my feet hanging out, and took the line; and my new friend gave hand to the rope over the back of the seat. The horse started to walk, and Little Dagon was drawn after; but the perverse little creature settled back in his strap till his tongue hung out. The stranger laughed.

"It seems that we cannot lead a calf unless the calf pleases," he said. "Can you think of any better way, my son?"

I thought hard, for I was ashamed to put my new acquaintance to so much trouble and have nothing to suggest. At last, I said, with some diffidence, that we might tie the calf's legs with the rope and put him in the rear of the wagon, while I walked behind.

"That appears to be a practical suggestion," the stranger remarked. "Do you think you can tie his legs?"

I answered that I believed I could if I had the calf on the ground. "Well, sir," said he, with a whimsical glance at me, "I think I can capsize the calf and hold him down, if you will agree to tie his legs within a reasonable time."

I said I would try; and while I held the rope the stranger alighted, seized the calf suddenly by the legs, and threw it down on its side. Little Dagon struggled pluckily, but my new ally held fast and called on me to do my part. After some hard picking at the knot, I untied the rope from the neck-strap, then tied the calf's legs into a bunch and crisscrossed the rope.

"Pretty well done, my son, pretty well done," was the encouraging comment of my new friend. "Now I will take him by the head while you seize him by the tail, and we will hoist him into the wagon."

Before we could do so, however, we heard a sudden rattle of wheels close at hand, and glancing around, I saw Gramp and Addison with old Sol in the express

wagon. They had harnessed and given chase; Theodora and Aunt Olive, whom they met, had adjured them to drive fast if they hoped ever to overtake me. Grandfather, on seeing who was helping me, exclaimed, "Why, Senator, how do you do, sir! My calf appears to be making you a great deal of trouble."

In fact, my friend in need was none other than Hon. Lot M. Morrill, who had been Governor of Maine for three terms in succession, and was now United States Senator. Grandfather and he had been acquaintances for forty years or more; and I have inferred since that the object of Mr. Morrill's visit on this occasion was in part political. At this particular time the Senator was "looking after his political fences" — although this phrase had not yet come into vogue.

Grandfather and Mr. Morrill immediately drove home together, leaving Addison and me to put the calf in the express wagon and follow more slowly.

Senator Morrill at this time gave me the impression of being a man oppressed by not a little anxiety, and inclined to be dissatisfied with his career. As distinctly as if it were yesterday, I recall what he said to me the next morning as he was about to drive away. "My son," said he impressively, "don't you be a politician. Be a farmer like your grandfather. He has had a happier life than I have had."

As it chanced, I was soon to have further experience with headstrong young cattle.

CHAPTER IV

OUR FIRST JERSEY COW

THEODORA had brought home the mail from the post-office out at the Corners; and I remember that at the breakfast table next morning, the Old Squire, who was reading the news from the weekly papers, looked up and said in a tone of solemnity, that General Winfield Scott was dead; that he had died at West Point, May 29.

The announcement signified little to us young people, whose knowledge of generals and military events was confined mainly to the closing years of the Civil War, but meant much to those of the older generation, who remembered with still glowing enthusiasm the victor of Lundy's Lane in 1814 and the conqueror of Mexico in 1846.

"He was a good man and a patriot as well as an able general," the Old Squire remarked. "And, old as he had become in 1861, President Lincoln would have done better to trust more than he did to General Scott's judgment." At that time the Old Squire and nearly every one else in Maine feared that President Johnson was a treacherous and exceedingly dangerous man, whereas the verdict of history seems to be that he was merely a very egotistical and headstrong one. There was already much talk of impeaching him and removing him from office, although the Old Squire had doubts as to the wisdom of so radical a course.

He and Addison were debating the matter quite earnestly, when there came a knock at the door, which I answered, and saw standing there a strong, sturdy,

well-favored boy of about my own age, one I was to know intimately all the rest of my life; for this, as I now learned, was Thomas Edwards, from the farmhouse of our nearest neighbors across the fields. He had come to fetch word to the Old Squire that another farmer, named Gurney — a relative of the Edwards — who lived at a distance of three or four miles, had concluded to sell us one of his *new* Jersey heifers.

That morning, too, I recollect that just as we were finishing breakfast, grandmother looked around on our enlarged family circle, over her spectacles, and said to the Old Squire, "Joseph, we really must have their pictures taken," — referring to us young folks.

"I want them all taken now, so that we may have them to keep, and know how they looked when they first came home here," the old lady continued. "I don't want it put off and not have any pictures of them, if anything should happen, as we did poor Ansel's and Coville's. (Two of my uncles who fell during the Civil War.)

"We must go down to the village some afternoon and have them taken," grandmother continued quite positively.

"Well, we will see about it," the Old Squire said over his paper.

"It must be done and done soon," Gram insisted.

"Yes, yes, Ruth, I suppose so," he assented.

"There must be no 'suppose so' about it," said Gram, very decidedly. "It is one of the things that mustn't be put off and off like your trip to Father Rasle's Monument."

We newcomers had yet to learn that for twenty years the Old Squire had been talking, every season, of making two wagon excursions, of several days' duration each, one to Lovewell's Pond, the scene of the historic fight of Captain Lovewell and his rangers with the Pequawket Indians in 1640, and the other

to Norridgewock, where the devoted French missionary, Father Sebastian Rasle, lost his life in 1724.

Owing to the constant press of farm labors, opportunity for setting off had never yet fairly occurred. But the Old Squire always fully intended to go; he was genuinely interested in the early history of our State and, indeed, remarkably well posted as to it. Francis Parkman, the historian, had once come to the farm for a day or two, on purpose to inquire as to certain points connected with the massacre at Norridgewock.

Nothing more was said that morning about our pictures, however, for both the Old Squire and Addison were engrossed in the late disturbing news concerning President Johnson.

"And father says," continued Thomas, "that I may go over to uncle Gurney's with Addison and help him get the heifer home."

These, be it said, were the first Jersey cattle ever seen in that vicinity. Gurney had bought four of them from a stock farm somewheres in Massachusetts, and their arrival marked an era in Maine dairying. Farmers were very curious about them. Opinions differed widely as to their value.

The Jersey cow is now, to quote a certain witty Congressman, one of our national institutions. Asked to name the five most characteristic American "institutions," this waggish legislator replied, "The Constitution, Free Public Schools, Railroads, Newspapers and the Jersey cow!"

There is a spice of homely truth underlying the jest. For certainly the greatest delicacies of our tables are the cream, the butter and the milk that now come to us from our clean, well-managed dairies; and it is hardly too much to say that we owe the best of these products to the Jersey cow.

By careful breeding and feeding the Jersey has gained wonderfully in size, temper and good appear-

ance, until few handsomer animals can now be found in the farmer's pasture or barn. But many of us can remember the first Jerseys, and what a reproach their wizened bodies and piebald hides were in any herd. It was admitted that their milk was yellow and wonderfully rich in butter fat; but they were so homely, so spindle-legged, so brindled along the withers, so pale-yellow down the sides, so foolishly white in the flanks, down the fore legs and about the jowls, yet so black-kneed and wildly touched about the eyes, that no one could admire them.

"That a cow!" cried an honest old Vermont farmer, the first time he ever saw one. "Why that looks like a cross between a deer and a 'Black Scotch'!"

As to the real origin of Jersey cattle, nothing very definite is known. They are said to have been brought to the Isle of Jersey from Normandy.

There is a theory, supported by tradition and legend, that thirty centuries ago, when the Druids first came into western Europe, they brought with them the Hindu sacred cattle, derived from the zebu, or Brahman ox, in order that their sacrificial rites might be supplied with the "cream-white heifers" which the altars of that strange, wild religion demanded.

It is thought that in after centuries the Druid sacred cattle were cross-bred with the urus or wild German buffalo, described by Cæsar, or else with native breeds of domestic cattle, owned by the Gauls; and that the Jersey of to-day is the far-descended progeny of this singular union of zebu and urus. In color the sacred cattle ranged from white, through mouse, fawn and brown to black.

But Addison could not go that day; so with a smile at thoughts of my recent experience leading Little Dagon, the Old Squire said that I might go; and immediately Thomas and I set off on foot with a rope nose-halter, a few nubbins of corn in our pockets as

" coaxers," and many injunctions to be gentle. Grandfather supposed that two boys of our age would be able to get a small heifer home without difficulty, one leading, the other following after with a switch.

When we reached the farm, we found the odd-looking little white and brindled heifer tied up at a stanchion in the barn; and Gurney appeared to have doubts about our ability to take her home.

" She's a Jersey, boys," said he. " They're ticklish creatures. Awful skittish at everything they see, particularly women-folks. So you must look out sharp."

Thomas thought we could lead or hold a heifer as small as this one, even if she was frightened. With the assistance of the farmer and his son, we adjusted the halter, gave the heifer nubbins of corn, coaxed her out upon the highway, and set off.

It soon became evident, however, that she was very timid. At every unusual object along the road her head was raised high, and it was only by much coaxing that we made any progress. Moreover, her fears appeared to increase with every onward step. Presently we met a dog, and for five minutes the heifer careered wildly on both sides of the road. The dog behaved very well, however, and made a wide detour to pass us.

A horse and buggy and a loaded wagon each made trouble for us. The driver of the team said, " You've got one of those wild Jerseys there; I'd sooner try to lead a deer! "

Thomas and I had found already that, small as she was, both of us could hardly hold her; she had a manner of bounding high with such suddenness that we had no chance to brace our feet. By this time she was inspecting everything by the roadside and far ahead, and an hour was spent in going half a mile.

Suddenly her head went up higher than ever. She had discerned what we had not yet seen, two girls

coming on foot a quarter of a mile away. Not another inch could we make her budge, either by pulling or switching. Her eyes were fixed on those girls, and it was plain there would be trouble when they came nearer. Thomas bethought himself to blind her, however, and, taking off his jacket, wrapped it about her head and horns, while I took the precaution to pass the end of the halter around a post of the wayside fence.

Thus prepared, we stood waiting the approach of the girls, and if they had gone by quietly, our precautions would have sufficed; but they were greatly amused by the spectacle of our hooded heifer, and one of them laughed outright. At the sound of her voice our Jersey went into the air, broke the halter rope, and leaping blindly against the rail fence beside which we were holding her, knocked down a length of it and ran off across the field on the other side, with Thomas's jacket and the head-stall of the halter still on her head. We gave chase, but the heifer shook off the jacket and ran for a cedar swamp seven or eight hundred yards distant.

We spent the remainder of the afternoon in that swamp, engaged in efforts to approach near enough to the animal to seize and secure her. By this time all her wilder instincts appeared to have revived. She fled from one end of the swamp to the other, seeking the densest thickets of cedar and alder, where she would lie up, still as a mouse, till we found her; then she would make a break and run to another quarter of the swamp.

Hungry and tired out, I now earnestly desired to go home; but my resolute new acquaintance declared that they would all laugh at us if we returned without the heifer.

At length, we went back to Gurney's farm, just at dusk, spent the night there and in the morning proceeded to the cedar swamp again and resumed the

hunt, the farmer and his son Oscar accompanying us out of compassion for our ill success.

An hour's search convinced us that the heifer had left the cedar thickets; and she was at last discovered in a pasture half a mile away, in company with six other young cattle to which she had joined herself during the night in spite of three intervening fences.

On approaching them, however, it became apparent that the fugitive Jersey had in some manner infused her own wild fears into these new acquaintances. They all set off on the run with tails in the air; and after coursing round the pasture several times, they jumped the fence and made for a distant wood-lot, our Jersey leading the rout.

By this time I was wholly disheartened. But Thomas still said, "Come on. We've got to get her;" and I followed wearily after the others. Proceeding to the farmhouse of the owner of the young cattle, whose name was Robbins, we informed him what had occurred, and in company with his son, Luke, spent the forenoon searching for the runaways. Mr. Gurney returned home, but Oscar went with us. The cattle had made off to an extensive tract of forest, and after following their tracks hither and thither for some time longer, hunger impelled us to retrace our steps. Luke Robbins told us that the six young Durham cattle in their pasture had previously been docile, and that they had never before broken out. The Jersey heifer seemed to have demoralized them.

Quite discouraged and tired out, we now started for home, and were glad enough to meet the Old Squire and Addison driving over to look us up. Thomas's father, too, had come in quest of him. Night was at hand; we all went home; and that was the last of the Jersey for months. I may as well go on here, however, and relate the rest of the story.

Farmer Robbins and his son continued the search next day, but could not find their stock; and beyond

making inquiries, we did nothing further for four or five months, until "housing time," in November. Then, shortly after the first snow came, Luke Robbins drove over to tell us that the fugitive cattle were reported to be in the woods, six miles to the northwestward of their farm. He thought that we might like to join in an effort to recover them and get them home before winter set in. Two deer-hunters had seen them, but they were very wild and ran away at speed. A party was now made up to attempt their capture, consisting of the Old Squire and Addison, with two of our hired men and Thomas's father. Farmer Gurney and his son also joined in the hunt, as also Luke Robbins and his father. Thomas and myself were allowed to accompany them, by virtue of our previous experience. Halters, axes and food were also taken along.

No success attended the search during the first day, and we passed the night at a newly cleared farm, five miles from home. But cattle-tracks were discovered in dense fir woods near a large brook during the following morning; and after following them for two hours we came upon the whole herd, snugly sheltered in the ox hovel of a deserted lumber-camp.

It was a low log structure, roofed with turf, and it had not been occupied for three years. Bushes and briers had sprung up about it; but the door was open, and the cattle were inside, lying down. We could see our Jersey's head as she lay near the door, facing out, as if doing sentinel duty. But she had not seen us, and was chewing her cud as peacefully as if in a barn at home.

The situation was carefully studied from the bushes, at a distance; and then Asa Doane, one of the hired men, crept quietly up from the rear and, crawling round the corner of the hovel, suddenly clapped the old door to and held it fast, before the cattle had time to jump up and rush out.

The little herd was now penned up inside; but they made a great commotion, and we were at a loss how to proceed. After much talk Doane said that he would take a halter, slip in and secure the Jersey heifer, if the others would tend the door.

But he had no sooner entered than the heifer attacked him. He seized her by the horns, and they tumbled about in a lively manner for some moments. Immediately the other cattle began bawling, and evinced so unmistakable a disposition to gore Doane that he shouted for us to help him get out. This was not easily accomplished. At last he reached the door, and we hauled him forth and clapped it to again. But he had lost his hat, and his coat was torn in several places. He was also limping, for in the struggle the cattle had trodden on his feet.

"I wouldn't go in there again for fifty dollars!" he exclaimed. "They are wild cattle."

As none of the rest of the party had any wish to go in, and night was at hand, we made the door fast with props and went home.

This last trip ended my own part in the adventure. Our winter school began the next day, and the Old Squire deemed school of more importance to me than cattle-hunting.

But the plan finally adopted was to proceed to the place with two yokes of large, steady oxen, connected by a long draft-chain. A number of neighbors assisted; and seven or eight "tie-chains," such as are used to tie up cattle in the barn, were also taken along. After a series of violent struggles the wild young cattle were secured, one by one, and tied to the long draft-chain, on each side of it. Then with a yoke of heavy oxen in advance and another in the rear of the procession, to steady it, the rebellious creatures were constrained to walk home. For the first mile or so they bounded and struggled, and some of them even threw themselves down. But it was of no use; the

procession moved steadily on; and by the time they reached home all were pretty well tamed.

We kept this wild-headed little Jersey at the farm for seven or eight years afterwards, and several of her calves made good cows; but to the end of her life she was always a skittish little creature, apt to take fright at any moment. A dog coming along the barn floor in front of her manger was always the signal for a struggle at her stanchion. But the object of her worst fears was the sight of a woman! She would leap in the air, wrench and tear, and even bawl aloud and cast herself flat on the floor. Neither Gram nor any of the girls ever went in front of "Little Jersey," if it could be avoided. This fear of women has always seemed to me rather singular, for I am told that in the Isle of Jersey, the women usually care for the cows.

But this digression has taken me a long way in advance of my narrative.

CHAPTER V

SHEEP - WASHING — ADDISON'S NOVEL WATER - WARMER

"TO - MORROW we must wash the sheep," the Old Squire remarked at the breakfast table next day. "We will try your water-warming apparatus, Addison," he continued. "Do you think that you can get the pipes together again?"

"I am sure of it, sir," Addison replied. "But I shall have to go borrow the blacksmith's wrench and pipe-tongs."

"Ad thinks that patent warmer of his is something great," Halstead remarked ironically.

"I think it is nice to warm the water, and not put the poor sheep into stone-cold water when they are heated from running, in their heavy, hot fleeces," said Theodora.

"It seemed to prevent them from taking cold last year," observed the Old Squire. "Sheep often take cold when washed and sheared," he continued.

"If you girls go with us, you shall help fetch wood and tend fire," said Halstead. "It is a hard job to keep the fire up under the pipe."

"O we will help," cried Ellen. "It's fun, I think, to fetch dry stuff and make a big blaze."

"How are you off for soap, Ruth?" the Old Squire asked. "We shall want two bucketfuls of soft soap for the first washings."

"Well, sir, I don't know about that," replied Gram, not well pleased. "My soap barrel is getting low; and I have not been able to have Olive Witham come to make soap yet, nor clean house. I think that a bucketful will be all I can spare you."

"That will be small soap for seventy-six sheep," remarked Addison. "There ought to be a pint to every sheep, half a pint at least. You may work and work, and squeeze and squeeze, but you cannot get their thick fleeces clean unless you put on plenty of soap."

"Murches' folks never use soap," said Halstead. "The boys just fling the sheep into the pond and souse them round a few times, then let them crawl out. They don't bother with warm water and soap. Willis catches the sheep and pitches them in; and his father and Ben souse them. They stand in the water up to their waists all the time; but I saw Murch take a sly pull at a little bottle which he had set behind a stump on the shore."

"Murch does not half wash his sheep," Addison remarked. "When they carried their wool to market last year, it all had to go at twenty-eight cents per pound, as unwashed wool, when clean-washed brought forty cents. I don't like to stand in cold water two hours at a time, either. A man who takes a drink of liquor every half hour can stand it, maybe; but all people don't think it best to drink liquor."

"I suppose you would stand and chatter your teeth two hours before you would take a swallow of whiskey," said Halstead with a laugh.

"I would warm the water," retorted Addison. "Certain people we know would stand in cold water just for an excuse to get a drink."

It was manifest that Addison had the best of the argument, and that the Old Squire agreed with him.

"Let's get an early start with our housework," Theodora made haste to say, "so that we can all go. You must go, too, Gram. It is fun to see the long fires under the pipe."

"Yes, Gram, I want you to go and see how finely my new water-warmer works," said Addison. "The Edwardses are going to drive their flock over here

and wash them at the 'Little Sea' this year, so as to try the warm-water plan. They will come after we finish, in the afternoon."

I now asked Addison whether he really had a patent on his water-warmer. "O no," replied he, laughing. "You cannot take a patent right for warming water. Still, it is a rather new idea hereabouts. I use the iron pipe which we took out of a pump aqueduct a year ago. But you will see how we do it to-morrow."

We worked putting stove-wood into the wood-house that day; and after what seemed a remarkably short night, I waked to find Halstead dressing in haste.

"Ad's up, and gone after the tools," he said. "Ordered us to get up and help the old gent milk."

"Did he 'order' us to do it?" I asked, a little surprised.

"'Bout's good as that," grumbled Halstead. "Stuck his head in at the door and hollered, 'Hurry up now and help milk.' O he is dandy-high-jinks 'round this farm, I tell ye. Everything goes as he says. The old gent thinks he's a regular little George Washington."

I did not quite know what to think of this talk; it was evident that my two cousins did not altogether admire each other.

Meantime, Halstead had set off for the barn; but I lingered about the kitchen, where I was presently impressed into the service of Theodora and Ellen, who were kindling a fire and making preparations for breakfast.

"Now, cousin, do please split a few sticks of this wood," the latter besought me. "It's so large I cannot make it burn; and I am in no end of a hurry. Here is the axe. But look out sharp now, or you will chop your toes off. Take care now." She seemed half sorry, I thought, that she had asked me, after

watching my first strokes. For I laid about me with might and main, causing the splinters to fly, from a boy's natural instinct to show off before girls.

As there was a great deal of coarse wood in the shed, I continued to wield the axe, and split a large heap, for which those wily girls praised me without stint; but I am sure, none the less, that they were smiling on the sly. Gram, too, came out from the pantry and praised me, but she also laughed. It is exceedingly difficult for a boy to show off without exciting risibility. When Gramp came in with two milk-pails, presently, he also looked into the shed, to bid me good-morning, and went away smiling.

At length I heard the clang of iron on the doorstep, and looking out, saw that Addison had returned and thrown down the pipe-tongs. "You're a good one!" he exclaimed, catching sight of my woodpile. "Gram and those girls will make a saint of you right off. Splitting kindlings is the royal road to all their good graces. It means a doughnut, or a piece of pie, any time, at a moment's notice. All the same it is somewhat sweaty work," he added, noticing my perspiring brow. "I go a little easy on it myself; I never refuse when they ask me; but I don't try to make such a pile as that at one time."

Halse, who had been turning the cows to pasture, now came in; and breakfast being not quite ready, we went to the wagon-house and got down the lengths of iron pipe from the loft, preparatory to loading them into the cart, to be taken to the "Little Sea." It was what hardware dealers term inch and a quarter pipe, and it was in lengths or sections, each twelve feet long. These were somewhat heavy, and had screw threads cut at each end, so that the ten or twelve lengths could all be joined together by screwing them into couplings, and thus form one continuous pipe. The pipe-tongs and wrench were needed to turn the couplings.

Addison had called at the post-office, and the Old

Squire at once became engrossed in the papers, containing further news of President Johnson's quarrel with Congress. He and Addison were discussing politics during breakfast. It made me feel uncomfortably ignorant, to hear how well Addison was informed upon such matters, and how much interested Theodora appeared to be in their conversation. Addison even undertook to say what was Constitutional and what wasn't.

Not to be utterly outstripped, I ventured to express my opinion that General Hancock ought to be the next President; but neither Addison nor grandfather agreed with me, and I was afraid Theodora did not, for I thought she looked at me compassionately, as if my opinion was immature.

Halstead did not say a word, but ate his breakfast with an air of supreme indifference. Afterwards, as we were going out through the wood-shed, he remarked to me that it made him sick to hear Republicans palaver. "I'm a Democrat," said he. "I'm a 'Secesh,' too. I would be a Democrat anyway, if Ad was a Republican."

I confess to feeling somewhat "mugwumpish" myself that morning, for it was pretty plain that I never could lead the Republican party in that house, as long as Addison was about. Still, I did not like the idea of being a "copperhead;" — for that was the unhandsome designation which Addison applied to all lukewarm or doubtful citizens. On the whole, I decided that I had better be a quiet, not very talkative Unionist, and not mix too freely in politics. I had some idea, however, of being a "War Democrat," for General Hancock was then the subject of my very great admiration. I ventured to intimate darkly to Theodora, a few days afterwards, that I leaned slightly toward the condition of a "War Democrat;" but although she admitted, very tolerantly, that a "War Democrat" might be a decent citizen, I found that

she looked upon all such as a still not wholly regenerate order of beings, and that nothing less than a fully-fledged, unswerving Republican could command her respect and confidence. She took pains to let me know, however, that the fact of my being a "War Democrat" would not by any means constitute a bar to our future good-fellowship and cousinly acquaintance.

I remarked that Halstead appeared to be a "copperhead."

"Yes," she replied, with a heavy sigh.

"I don't know that I ought to tell you what he said the morning the dreadful news came, that President Lincoln was assassinated," she continued, after a pause and in a very saddened tone. "I would not speak of it if I did not have a reason."

"What did he say?" I asked, curiously.

"He and Addison were splitting stove-wood in the yard," continued Theodora. "They had been arguing and disputing. Ad does not argue with Halstead so much now; he has learned better. But that morning they had been talking pretty loud. Gramp had gone to the post-office, and when he came back and drove into the yard, he spoke in a low tone and said, 'Boys, there is a terrible rumor abroad.' 'What is it?' exclaimed Addison, turning around quickly.

"'News has come that the President and Secretary Seward have been assassinated,' said Gramp. Ad dropped his axe and stood looking at Gramp, as if spellbound. 'It cannot be!' he said. 'I am afraid it is too true,' replied grandfather.

"Then what do you think Halstead did but shout, 'Glad of it! Served 'em right!'

"Gramp looked at Halse, astonished; he did not know what to think, and drove on into the wagon-house without saying a word. But Addison turned on Halse and said, 'Anybody that will say that ought to be strung up to the nearest tree!'

"With that Halse shouted again, 'Glad of it! Glad of it!' and then jumped on a log and, flapping his arms against his sides, crowed like a rooster. Addison was so disgusted that he did not speak to Halstead for more than a week.

"And now you see how it is," Theodora continued to me, in a confidential tone. "That is why I told you this. Halstead has a reckless temper. He feels and sees, I suppose, that Addison is more talented than he is, and that all of us naturally place more confidence in what he says and does. That provokes Halstead to do and say what he otherwise wouldn't. Instead of doing his best, he often does his worst. Ad is intelligent and conscientious; he despises anything that is mean, or tricky, and he has no patience with any one who does such things. So they don't get along very well; and I often think that it isn't a good thing for them to be together — not a good thing for Halse, I mean.

"Isn't that a strange thing," continued Theodora, thoughtfully, "that because one boy is good and manly and intelligent, another one in the same household may not do nearly as well as he would if the first one were only just stupid?"

Theodora had taken me into moral waters quite beyond my depth, observing which, I presume, she went on to say that she wanted me to see and realize just how it was with Halstead, and always try to bring out his best side, instead of his worst.

If I could only have seen the matter in as clear a light as she did and labored as hard as she did to bring out that "best side" of my youthful kinsman, the outcome might perhaps have been different.

Breakfast over, after a parting glance at the newspaper, Gramp came out to give directions for the sheep-washing. "I will go to the pasture and see to getting the sheep myself this spring," said he; for it appeared that on a previous occasion, Halse and Addi-

son had difficulty, owing to the injudicious use of a dog, and finally arrived at the brook with the flock, as well as themselves, in a badly heated condition.

"I wish you would, sir," replied Addison. "I will yoke the oxen and haul the pipe to the brook while you are gone."

This plan being adopted, the oxen were yoked and attached to the cart; and under Addison's supervision, I took the goad-stick and received my first lesson in driving them. "Swing your stick with a rolling motion towards the nigh ox's head, and say, 'Back, Bright, get up, Broad,' when you want to call them towards you," he instructed me. "And when you want them to veer off, step to the head of the nigh ox and rap the off ox gently on the nose, then reversing your stick, touch up the nigh ox." He illustrated his teachings and I attempted to imitate him. Halstead stood at a little distance and laughed; no doubt it was laughable.

"What a teamster he will make!" I heard him saying to the girls. "He talks to old Bright as if he was afraid of hurting his feelings by swinging the goad-stick so near his head. Next thing he will say, 'Beg your pardon, Broad, but I really must rap your head and ask you to gee, if it will not be too much trouble.'"

They all laughed at Halse's joke, not unkindly, yet I can hardly describe how much it wounded my vanity and how incensed I felt with the joker. Slowly the oxen moved away out of hearing. Even my instructor, Addison, lagged a little behind to indulge in a broad smile. Glancing backward, I detected his amused expression and was almost minded to fling away the goad-stick; and I did not feel much reassured when he remarked that I did very well for a beginner.

"Don't mind what Halse says," Addison contin-

ued. "He cannot drive a cart through a gateway himself without tearing both gate-posts down."

There was solace in that statement. The oxen were very steady and well broken; and I contrived to drive the cart across the field and down through the pasture to the brook without much difficulty, although I noticed several times that old Bright rolled the white of his eye up to me, in a peculiar manner, as if something in my movements was puzzling to the bovine mind. I asked Addison whether he did not think that the oxen had very handsome eyes, for they seemed to me exceedingly soft and lustrous.

"Yes," replied he, "all cattle have just such large, fine eyes." But he appeared to be somewhat amused at the way I spoke of it; for the thought had struck me that it was strange and not quite clear why cattle should have eyes so much finer and more lustrous than human beings. I ventured to ask Ad's opinion on that subject, as we were taking out the pipe beside the brook. "Well," he replied, still laughing, "perhaps it is because their lives are simpler and they don't have so much evil in them as human beings do. But I recommend you to ask Elder Witham about that the next time he spends the night here."

We now took the pipe out of the cart and chained up the oxen to the nigh cart-wheel. Addison then explained to me his method of warming the water for washing the sheep. From the dam which formed the Little Sea, there was a considerable descent in the brook for some distance; and Addison's device consisted in laying the pipe from the pond above the dam, so as to carry water to two half-hogshead tubs, ninety or a hundred feet farther down the bed of the brook. The pipe rested on heaps of stones placed eight or ten feet apart and was thus elevated a foot and a half from the ground; and directly beneath it a fire was kindled and kept burning briskly all the time the washing was going on. The pipe was thus ex-

posed to the fire along its whole length; and it was found that the water running through it was rendered very comfortably warm where it ran out into the first tub. A short spout connected the first tub with the other, set a little lower down, so that the warm water ran on into that one. The sheep were first put into the lower tub and there soaped and scrubbed, then taken to the upper tub and rinsed thoroughly.

"Now get out the wrench and pipe-tongs," said Addison. "The first thing to do is to screw the pipe together."

This proved a task requiring some little muscular strength; and even when we had done our best, several of the couplings leaked a little. We put it together after awhile, however, and set the water running through it to the two half-hogshead tubs, which had also to be lifted from the cart and placed on a good foundation. Next, the sheep-yard, close beside the tubs, had to be repaired, for the brush fence had sunk low during the previous winter. Fresh bushes needed to be brought and a little green spruce shrub with which to block up the hole that served as a gate.

An hour or more elapsed while we were thus employed; and then, as we were about ready to attend to the fire, we heard the voices of the girls; and lo, besides Theodora and Ellen there was Gram herself, coming down the pasture side.

"Good," said Addison. "They will help us drag brush and dry stuff from the woods. It takes a lot of it to keep a good fire going. But the girls like that. Nothing suits girls half so well as a fire out of doors. You will see Gram herself fetching brush pretty soon.

"Just in time!" Addison shouted to them. "We were wishing for some help. Now for a brush-bee!" — and he led the way to the edge of the woods, at a little distance. "Gather up anything that will burn and carry it to the pipe."

Soon we were all running to and fro with armfuls

of it, and collected a large heap, alongside the pipe, which was presently set blazing at one end. From that point, the fire ran along beneath the whole line of pipe, and very soon the water came out steaming into the half-hogsheads.

Erelong the bleating of the sheep and lambs was heard. "They're coming!" Ellen cried. "I can see Wealthy running beside them, and Halse ahead of the flock with the salt dish. Gramp is behind."

"Now we must form a line down here and guide them into the sheep-yard," Addison exclaimed. "The old and cunning ones will not like to go in."

"They have been there before; they know what is in store for them, and they don't like it," said Gram, laughing. "They are like a little boy whom I took off the town farm one spring. He had not been washed since the previous summer. The sight of the tub frightened him dreadfully; he bleated louder than the sheep do when I put him into it."

The flock came on with a rush, Halstead and Wealthy at the sides and the Old Squire in the wake. By an adroit distribution of our forces, we headed them into the yard, although three or four old sheep made strenuous efforts to escape to one side and gain the woods, particularly one called "old Mag." This venerable ewe was in great trouble about her twin lambs that strayed continually in the press. The old hussy found opportunity, however, to dart out betwixt Addison and myself, and reached cover of a little hemlock thicket, with one of her lambs. But anxiety for the other one caused her to emerge again, bleating, when she was surrounded and ignominiously driven into the pen.

By this time the water was running as warm as fresh milk; and after taking breath, the Old Squire and Addison removed their coats, rolled up their sleeves and took their stations at the two tubs. Halstead, too, prepared to assist.

"Now," said Addison, "let's each one have his or her particular part to do. I will name you, sir" (addressing Gramp), "*Chief Washer,* if you please. You may stand at the first, or lower, tub and take each sheep as it comes from the yard. I will name Halse your *Assistant Washer.* I will be *Rinser* and stand at the second, or upper tub. Our new cousin here, I shall name *Catcher.* It is to be his business to catch the sheep in the yard and bring them, one by one, to the *Chief Washer,* and also take them back from the *Rinser* to the yard; and he will have to look out sharp, or some of those strong, young sheep will throw him. Fact, I think I will name Nell, who is pretty nimble and strong, *Assistant Catcher.* She is to help hold and pull them along to the tub — and pick Catcher up, if he gets thrown. Wealthy may be *Sheep-Hole-Tender;* she must guard the sheep-hole and open and close it with the spruce bush, as ordered by the Catcher and Assistant Catcher.

"I shall name Gram, if she has no objection, *Chief Fireman,* and Doad her assistant. It is to be their business to put the wood and dry stuff which we have gathered under the pipe and keep a good fire going.

"Are you all satisfied with your parts?" he then asked.

We all expressed ourselves delighted, except Halse, who desired to be Catcher, instead of Assistant Washer. Thereupon I offered to resign in his favor; but for reasons which they did not explain fully, the Old Squire and Addison opposed my resignation. Halse grumbled a little, but at length acquiesced.

"Now then," continued Addison, "every one to his or her station, and the business of the day will open."

Still laughing a good deal, we took our places.

Elevating his voice, Addison then called out, "Catcher, do your duty!"

The Sheep-Hole-Tender hauled aside the bush and

Catcher, followed by Assistant Catcher, entered the yard.

"Take a little one, to begin with," whispered Ellen, who apparently distrusted my competence for the office. That nettled me and, instead, I made a plunge for a big wether and fastened both hands into his wool. The animal gave a tremendous jump and then went round about that yard, into corners and over the backs of the other sheep, at a rate of speed that was simply distracting! But I held on. First, I was on my back, with the rest of the flock leaping overhead. The Assistant Catcher couldn't overtake us. At last, she turned and ran the other way and headed us into a corner, and there the wether fell down and I fell on top of him; and when the flock got done running by, I looked up and saw that the Chief Washer, Rinser, Chief Fireman and their Assistants had all left their posts and were peering over the fence into the yard, with faces wearing every appearance of excessive mirth.

But Addison cried out, "Hurrah for the Catcher!" and that relieved my embarrassment considerably.

My Assistant, however, looked coldly at me.

"What in the world possessed you to grab that biggest sheep first?" she commented, as we dragged the now nearly breathless beast out at the sheep-hole. "And you mustn't run at them in such a savage way. No wonder the poor thing was scared! Go toward them more calm and gentle-like."

It appeared to me highly unbecoming that my Assistant should take it upon herself to lecture her superior after that fashion; and I promptly informed her (my blood being pretty hot by this time) that I would thank her to obey orders and give advice when it was asked for. Much abashed at this unexpected blast of spunk, cousin Ellen asked my pardon. When I delivered the sheep into the hands of the Chief Washer, the old gentleman gazed benignly at me and simply

remarked, "Well, well, sir, you had a dusty time of it, didn't you? But you'll learn, you'll learn, my boy."

They proceeded to soap the animal by pouring strong suds into its wool, and then seizing it by the legs, threw it upon its side in the tub of water. Thereupon another struggle ensued, during which the Chief Washer and his Assistant were plentifully spattered; but the experienced calmness with which the former bore it, greatly excited my admiration. After perhaps three or four minutes of scrubbing and squeezing the wool, the now bedraggled and hopelessly patient creature was passed on to the Rinser, who in turn immersed and rinsed it in the cleaner water of the upper tub. Meantime another sheep had been required from the Catcher, who again entered the yard, followed by his Assistant. This time I was quite content to attempt the capture of a smaller one, and to approach the animal in a less precipitate manner; for much as I had spurned my cousin's advice at the moment of receiving it, I now recognized its value.

The Catcher and his Assistant were kept very busy during the remainder of the forenoon, for the Chief Washer was an experienced and rapid operator. Some of the young sheep proved wild and refractory; and I remember that both Ellen and I grew very tired by the time the last of the seventy had been caught, subdued, dragged to the tub, and then dragged back to the yard from the Rinser's tub. I for one had had quite enough of it, and was content to sit down and look on, while Halstead, Addison and Theodora caught several of the lambs, and ducked them in the tub, by way, as they said, of giving them an early lesson and a foretaste of what they would have to encounter the next spring, in the regular order of things.

The fire was now allowed to subside under the water-pipe; and the Chief Fireman declared that she

and the girls must set off for the house at once, in order to prepare dinner, for by this time the sun was nearing the meridian and every one getting hungry.

It was an easy matter to drive the now docile and water-soaked flock back to pasture; and we left pipe and tubs at the brook for our neighbors. When we returned from the pasture, Gram and the girls had a hastily prepared meal in readiness, consisting of fried eggs, bacon, and a " five minute pudding " with cream. What a flavor it all had! My only fear for some minutes was, lest there would not be half enough of it! While at table, Rinser, Assistant Washer, Catcher and even Chief Washer and Chief Fireman laughed a great deal as the various incidents and mishaps of the morning were recounted. It is certain that work always passes off much more pleasantly when it is enlivened by some such play-plan as that which Addison had devised.

CHAPTER VI

THE VERMIFUGE BOTTLE

"SHALL we dip the lambs as we did last spring, after shearing the sheep?" Addison asked the Old Squire, as we drew back from table.

"I suppose we shall have to do it," the old gentleman replied. "It is a disagreeable job, but it needs to be done."

"That means another poke stew!" cried Ellen, with a look of disgust.

I was quite in the dark as to what a "poke stew" might be.

"O it's beautiful smellin' stuff!" exclaimed Halstead. "Going to put any tobacco into it?" he asked.

"A little," replied Gramp. "That is about the only use I ever would like to see tobacco put to," he added with a glance at Halse, at which the latter gave me a sly nudge under the table.

"Then I suppose we may as well take two large baskets with tools for digging, and go down to Titcomb's meadow for the poke," suggested Addison. "If you can get the arch-kettle hot while we are gone, we can have the poke put to stew and simmer, so as to be good and strong by day after to-morrow. I suppose you will shear the sheep that day; and by the next morning the lambs will need attending to, will they not, sir?"

"Most likely," replied the Old Squire, smiling to see how Addison was taking the burden of work on his young shoulders. "I can certainly get the kettle

hot," he added, laughing. "That looks like the easiest part of the job."

"But you worked hard this forenoon, sir," Addison said. "I noticed how you handled those sheep. To wash seventy sheep is no light job."

"Ad doesn't count me in at all," remarked Halse. "I reckon the 'Assistant Washer' had something to do."

"Yes, my Assistant worked well," said the Old Squire. "I could not have washed more than fifty, but for his aid."

"Well, there is one thing to be said, right here and now," interposed Gram with decision. "I cannot and will not have that awful mess of poke, tobacco and what-not brewed in the kitchen arch-kettle. Now you hear me, Joseph. Last year you stewed it there and you nearly drove us out of the house. Such a stench I never smelled. It made me sick all night and filled the whole house. I said then it should never come into the kitchen again. You must take the other kettle and set it up out of doors."

"Aren't you growing a little fussy, Ruth?" replied the Old Squire, evidently to rally her, for he laughed roguishly.

"Maybe I am," replied Gram, shortly. "If you were a little more 'fussy' about some things, it would be no failing."

This bit of fencing amused Addison and Theodora very much; and I began to surmise that good-humored as grandmother habitually was, she yet had a will of her own and was determined to regulate her domain indoors in the way she deemed suitable.

"Well, we will boil the stuff out of doors this year," replied the Old Squire. "It is not the kind of perfumery women-folks like to smell," he added, teasingly.

"Now don't try to be funny about it," rejoined Gram severely. "I never ran you much in debt for

perfumery, as you know. But I don't think it is quite fair for a man to bring such a nauseous mess as that into the kitchen to stew, then run off and leave it for the women-folks to stand over and stir, and finally leave the dirty kettle for them to scrub out the next day!"

"Hold on, Ruth! Hold on. You've let out a great deal more than I wanted you to, now!" cried the Old Squire. "I remember now, I did forget that kettle last year. 'Twas too bad. I don't blame you, Ruth Ann, I don't blame you in the least for grumbling about it."

With that Gram looked up and laughed, but still gave her head a slight toss.

I watched for a day or two a little anxiously, to see if she really cherished any resentment, but soon discovered that there was no real ill-feeling; it was only Gram's way of holding her ground and standing for her house rights.

As we went out to get shovels and the two baskets, I ventured to ask Addison, confidentially, whether Gram were really severe. "No!" said he. "She's all right. She touches the Old Squire up a little once in awhile, when he needs it; she always gets him foul, too. I suppose he doesn't try very hard to hold up his end, but she always floors him when they get to sparring. Then he will laugh and say something to patch things up again. O they never really quarrel. Gramp once said to me, as we were going out into the field together, after Gram had been touching him up, 'Addison,' said he, 'your grandmother was a Pepperill. They were nice folks; but they had spicy tempers, some of them. Old Sir William Pepperill, that led our people down to Louisburg, was her great-great-uncle. They were good old New England stock, but none of them would ever bear a bit of crowding; and I always take that into account.'"

Halstead came out and then went to search for a

tool which they termed a "nigger hoe," a hoe with a narrow blade, such as, in the old plantation days of the South, the negroes are said to have used for turning over the turf of new fields.

Theodora came to the door of the wagon-house. "Going with us after poke?" Addison called out to her.

"I wish we could," she replied; "but we have lots to do in the house. Gram says that, as we were out all the forenoon, we must stay indoors the rest of the day."

Ellen, too, was espied gazing regretfully after us, as we set off with the baskets and tools. Halse had a pocketful of doughnuts (which he always called duffnuts). He had made a raid on the pantry, he said, and enlivened the way by topping off his dinner with them.

We went out through the fields to the southwest of the farm buildings, then crossed a lot called the calf pasture, and then a swale, descending through woods and bushes into the valley of the west brook.

"This is the meadow-brook," said Addison. "But Titcomb's meadow is a mile below here. We will follow down the brook till we come to it.

"That's poke," he continued, pointing to a thick, rank, green plant, with great curved leaves, now about a foot in height and growing near the bank of the brook. Halstead gave one of the plants a crushing stroke with his hoe, and I noticed that it gave off a very unpleasant odor.

"It is poison," Addison remarked. "It is the plant that botanists call *veratrum viride,* I believe. But the common name is Indian poke."

"O Ad knows everything; his head is stuffed with long words!" exclaimed Halse, derisively. "It'll bust one of these days. I don't dare to get very near him on that account."

"No danger that yours will ever 'bust' on ac-

count of what's inside it," retorted Addison, laughing.

But Halstead, although he had begun the joking, did not appear to take this shot back in good part. He turned aside and began to cut a witch-hazel rod.

"Now quit that, Halse," exclaimed Addison. "Wait till we get the poke dug, then we will all three cut some rods and fish for half an hour."

But Halstead proceeded to string a hook, bait it with a bit of pork which he had brought, and then dropped it into a hole beside an alder bush at a bend of the stream.

"He is the most provoking fellow I ever saw," muttered Addison. "He will fish all the time, and we will have the poke to dig. I meant to show you a good hole to fish in, but now he will scare all the trout away!

"Come on, Halse!" he shouted back. "What's the use to skulk and shirk like that?"

"O you dig viratum-viridy!" cried Halstead. "You understand all about that, you know. I don't comprehend it well enough; but I guess I can manage to fish a little." A moment after we saw him haul out a trout, which glistened as it went wriggling through the air and fell in the grass. Halse got it, and holding it up so that we could see it, shouted, "No viratum-viridy about that!"

"No use fooling with him," Addison said to me. "His nose is out of joint about that word. He will not lift a finger to help us, but will catch a good string of fish to take home; and if I say a word about it to the folks, he will declare that I was so overbearing that he couldn't work with me. That's the song he always sings.

"Sometimes," continued Addison, with another backward glance of suppressed indignation, "I get so 'mad' all through at that boy that I could thrash

him half to death. If it wasn't for Doad and the old folks, I believe I should do it.

"But of course that isn't the best thing to do," Addison continued. "The best way to get along is to have as little to do with him as you can, and not pay any attention to his quirks. For he is the trick pony in this family. You cannot go out with him anywheres, without having some sort of a circus; I defy you to. You see now, if we ever go out together, without a scrape."

We went on down the brook to the meadow, called after its owner's name; the stream was more sluggish here, and along its turfy banks the clumps of Indian poke were very numerous. With shovel and hoe, we then proceeded to dig up the rank-growing and ranker-smelling plant. To get out much of the root required a great effort, and we did not like to smear our hands with the juice. For this plant (which is the same made use of by homœopathic physicians as a medicine) proves poisonous to cattle when, as is sometimes the case in the early spring, the animals are tempted to crop its rank, fresh leaves. In order to take home enough in our two baskets, we trod it down with our feet very solidly; and when at length they were heaped full, each was heavy.

"I wish Ellen could have come, to help us home with it," said Addison. "There ought to be two to each basket, one on each side, and so change hands once in a while."

"Are we going to fish now?" I asked.

"Well, but you see the sun is nearly down," replied Addison. "It is getting late in the afternoon for fishing, and we have a hard job before us, to tote these baskets home. Besides, Halse has fished away down past us, in all the good holes. I guess we had better not stop this time, but wait for a lowery day.

"Come, help carry these baskets home!" he shouted

to Halstead, who was now near the lower end of the meadow. But the latter was very intent at a trout-hole into which he had just dropped his hook, and did not respond. We waited a few minutes, then shouldered the baskets, and carrying our shovels in our free hands, set off. At first the basket did not seem very heavy; but, by the time I had gone half a mile, I found myself very tired. Addison, however, plodded sturdily forward with his basket, and after resting for a few moments, I toiled on in his wake.

Presently Halse overtook us.

"Hullo, shirk!" Addison called out. "How many fish?"

Halstead held up a pretty string of fourteen.

"Well, you've had all the fun so far," said Addison. "Now let's see you carry one of these baskets."

"What a fuss about a little basket of green stuff!" exclaimed Halstead contemptuously; and throwing mine on his shoulder, he started on at a great pace.

Before he had got as far as the "calf pasture," however, he began to lag, fell behind and at length set down the basket.

"What was the use of stuffing them so full!" he grumbled. "There was no need of so much."

A few rods farther on, he again set the basket down on a rock. Addison turned round and laughed at him. "What's the matter with that 'little basket of green stuff?'" he exclaimed.

"But there's no need of so much!" cried Halstead, and he threw out a part of it before going on. I gathered up what he threw out and followed behind him. When we came to the stone wall between the pasture and the southwest field, Halse set the basket down and hurried on past Addison to the house, in advance of us.

"He has run ahead to show his trout and tell a fine story," said Addison, with a laugh. "That's the way he always does. But they know him pretty well. I

don't take the trouble to contradict any of his talk now."

"Does he tell lies?" I asked.

"Not exactly outright lies," said Addison. "But he will talk large and try to lead the folks to think that he dug the most of the poke and brought it home, besides catching the trout. That's the kind of boy he is; but if I were you, I would not mind anything of that sort. They all know how it is — a great deal better than they want to know. You will not lose anything by keeping quiet." Addison saw that I was a little ruffled on account of the fishing incident, and thought it best to calm me.

By the time I reached the farm-yard, where the Old Squire had hung up a large iron kettle and had water boiling in it, I was very tired indeed. What with splitting wood in the early morning, catching seventy sheep and digging and carrying poke, I had put forth a good deal of muscular strength that day, for a lad unused to such exertion. In fact, the day had seemed a week in length to me; for I appeared to myself to have learned a hundred new things since morning, and had passed through a wide series of new experiences.

But supper was ready, and supper is a great source of recuperation with a hungry boy. How delicious the "pop-overs" and maple syrup tasted! I was ashamed to ask for a sixth "pop-over;" but when cousin Theodora called for more and slipped a sixth upon my plate, I felt very grateful to her. Halstead was boasting of his skill fishing, and relating how he threw the trout out of the holes.

"Won't they taste good for breakfast!" he exclaimed. "Nell, if you will clean them and fry them, you shall have three. I shall want four for my share," he continued; "and that will give the rest of you one apiece!"

Addison laughed. "That's real generous of you,

Halse, seeing that the rest of us had such poor luck fishing," said he. Theodora was listening, and by and by asked me in a whisper — her chair at table being next mine — whether Halstead had helped dig the poke.

"Ask Addison," I said, laughing in turn.

She did not ask, but I noticed that her face wore a thoughtful expression during the remainder of the time we were at table.

After supper we put the poke into the kettle. The Old Squire had already chipped up and thrown into it a pound of tobacco; and during the evening we brought wood several times from the wood-shed and kept the kettle boiling. By the time it had grown dark, I was glad to creep away to bed, for I had grown so sleepy that I could scarcely keep my eyes open. It seemed to me, too, that I had no more than fallen soundly asleep when I heard somebody knocking and saying that it was time to get up and dress. 'Twas actually some moments before I could believe that morning had come again. The sun had risen, however, and Halstead was dressing. "Grandmarm's up fryin' my trout," said he. "I can smell 'em. O won't they taste good! But one is all you can have."

"If you had done your part, we might all three have caught some trout," I grumbled, for I felt sleepy still and not in a good humor.

"Look here," said Halstead, "I stand a good deal of that kind of talk from Ad, but you needn't think you can take up his tune."

"What will you do?" I asked.

"Give you a thrashing," said Halstead. "It would do you good, too. One little George Washington is all we can have in this house."

I had some doubts as to his being able to handle me; still he was considerably the larger, and I concluded that I had better not provoke him to a trial of his ability in that direction. But his threat set a deep

resentment brewing in my mind. At breakfast time, however, he attempted to soften the asperities of boy life between us, by putting two trout, instead of one, on my plate. I surmised that Theodora had prompted him to do it, however, but was not certain.

Gramp and Ellen had been to the pasture the previous evening and driven the flock of sheep and lambs down to the west barn, where they had remained shut up over night. This was the Old Squire's custom with his flock the night of the washing, to prevent the sheep from taking cold, and also from a theory of his that if they were kept warm for two nights after washing, the oil from their skins would start sufficiently to put the wool in proper condition for shearing on the third day.

After breakfast, the business of the day was announced to be bean-planting, at which Halstead groaned audibly. Twelve quarts of yellow-eyed beans, which had been carefully picked over, were brought out from the granary chamber for seed; and with tin basins to drop from and hoes to cover with, we were about setting off for the field, when the bleating of sheep was heard along the road, and a babel of voices. "There comes Edwards' flock!" cried Halstead. "And there's Tom and Kate."

The flock went streaming along the road; and we young folks turned out to assist in driving them through the field and pasture, down to the yard by the Little Sea.

Thomas I had met already. His sister Catherine looked to be a little older than Ellen. She and our girls appeared to be great friends and rapidly exchanged a stock of small news and confidences. I felt bashful about drawing near them, to receive an introduction; but Ellen brought her young neighbor around, near where I was helping the other boys pen up the sheep, and informed her that I was the new cousin who had come to live at the farm, and hence

that we must needs become acquainted. Catherine and I did not become much acquainted, however, for months afterwards.

Thomas and Catherine had an older brother, who did not appear with them that morning. Mr. Edwards himself was a strong, weather-browned farmer, then about forty-five years of age. Addison explained to them the workings of his water-warming apparatus, and showed them where fuel could be gathered for a fire beneath the pipes; we then returned to go to our work. Before we had gone to the field, however, another interruption occurred. A swarm of bees came out of one of the hives, at the bee-house in the garden, and after mounting in a dense, brown cloud into the air over the hives, settled upon the limb of a large apple tree, a few rods distant. Gram bustled out with a pan and began drumming noisily upon it, to drown the hum of the queen bee, as she said, and thus prevent the swarm from flying away.

Meantime the Old Squire was putting on a veil and gloves, and then came out with a saw in his hand, while Addison brought forth a new hive which had been hurriedly rinsed out with salt and water.

"Fetch a ladder, quick!" was the order to Halstead and me.

Theodora had brought the clothes-line, which Addison hastily took from her hands, and climbing the apple tree, attached one end of it to the bending bough upon which the dark-brown mass of bees now clustered. This seemed to me then to be a very brave act, for numbers of the bees were darting angrily about, and one — as he afterwards showed us — stung him on the wrist.

By this time the Old Squire had set the ladder, and climbing up, sawed off the bough a little back of the point where the bees were clinging to it. All this time Gram was drumming vigorously without cessation; and Theodora having fetched a broad bit of board

which she placed on the ground under the tree, Addison slowly lowered the bough with the bees till it rested upon the board, when Gramp clapped the empty hive over them, and the swarm was hived; for during the day the bees went up from the bough into the top of the hive, and that evening it was gently removed to a place in the row of hives at the bee-house.

This was an early swarm, hence valuable. Gram repeated to us a proverb in rhyme which set forth the relative values of swarms.

> "A swarm in May is worth a load of hay.
> A swarm in June is worth a silver spoon,
> But a swarm in July is not worth a fly."

July swarms would not have time to lay up a store of honey during the season of flowers.

Between bees and neighbors the forenoon was far advanced before we reached the field and began bean-planting. Quite enough of it remained, however, to render me certain that farm work, in summer, is far from being a pastime. We planted the beans among the corn which had been planted two weeks previously and was now a finger's length above the ground. The corn hills were three feet and a half apart, and between the hills of every row we now inserted a hill of beans. Halstead and I dropped the seed, three beans to a hill, going a few steps in advance of Addison and the old Squire, who followed us with hoes and covered the beans. The process of dropping was very simple; we had only to make an imprint in the soft earth with the right heel, and then drop three beans in the hole. Yet with the sun hot above my head, I found it a sweaty task, and was but too glad to hear Ellen blow the horn for dinner.

Bean-planting was the business again after dinner, but dark clouds rose in the west, shortly before three o'clock, and soon the first thunder-shower of the season rose, rumbling upward over the White Mountains.

We were compelled to run for the barn. Gramp improved the opportunity to sharpen the sheep-shears, and as soon as the shower abated, sent Halstead off to notify a man at the Corners, named Peter Glinds, a professional shearer, that his services would be required on the following day. "Old Peter," as he was called, had made shearing sheep his spring vocation for many years; he was a very tall, lean, yellow old man, who was reported to use a plug of tobacco a day, the year round.

Addison set about preparing a half-hogshead tub to hold the poke decoction for immersing the lambs after the sheep were sheared.

But singeing off caterpillars' nests in the orchard was my work for the remainder of that afternoon and the following forenoon. I went up to the west barn a number of times, however, to see Peter Glinds shear sheep, for I had a great curiosity concerning this piece of farm work.

Addison and Halstead were assisting at the shearing, the latter catching and fetching the sheep, one by one, to the shearers, while the former was attending to the fleeces, binding up each one by itself in a compact bundle with stout twine. Instead of sitting at a bench, or standing at a table, the sheep-shearer worked on his knees, extending the sheep prone upon the barn floor. Old Peter could shear a sheep in ten minutes; Gramp was less speedy with the shears; he contrived to shear about as many as Peter, however, for, after every fourth sheep, the latter would have to stop to light his pipe and refresh himself. "A bad habit! A bad habit!" he would exclaim nearly every time he lighted up. "A bad habit! but I can't seem to get along 'thout it." He also "chewed" constantly during the intervals between smokes.

Peter was not very considerate of the feelings of the sheep while under his hands, and a little careless with the shears. Naturally a sheep will get clipped

occasionally, and lose a bit of skin; but all those that Peter sheared were plentifully covered with red spots. It nettled the Old Squire, who always detested needless cruelty to domestic animals. One of the sheep, in fact, looked so badly that Gramp exclaimed, "Glinds, if you are going to skin the sheep, better take a butcher knife!"

"'Twas a bad nestly sheep; 'twouldn't keep still nowheres," replied Peter.

The old man had a thin, but rather long, gray beard; and while shearing one of the sheep, either in revenge for its cuts, or else, as is more likely, mistaking Peter's beard for a wisp of hay, it made a fitful grab at it and tweaked away a small mouthful. Peter cried out angrily and continued scolding in an undertone about it for some minutes. This vastly amused Addison, who chanced to see the incident. In addition to his duties with the wool, Addison was also "doctor." When a sheep was cut with the shears, Gramp had the spot touched up with a swab, dipped in a dish of melted tallow, to coat over the raw place and exclude the air. To be effective, however, the tallow needed to be hot, or at least quite warm, so that Addison was frequently making trips with the tallow dipper to the stove in the house kitchen.

Going in with him to tell the girls of the accident to old Peter's beard, I found them laboring and discouraged over the churn; for some reason the cream had failed to come to butter that morning in a reasonable time. They had been churning for nearly two hours. It was an old-fashioned dasher churn, and the labor was far from light. Addison could not stop to assist them; but I volunteered to do so, and soon found that I had embarked in a tiresome business, for we had to work at the dasher for as much as an hour more before the butter came.

That evening I had an ill turn. It may have been due to change of climate, or of food, or perhaps the

unwonted exercise. Gram, however, was convinced that I had a "worm-turn;" and that night, for the first time, I made the acquaintance of the Vermifuge Bottle!

Now Gram was a dear old soul, but had certain fixed ideas as to the ailments of youngsters and the appropriate remedies therefor. Whenever any one of us had taken cold, or committed youthful indiscretions in diet, she was always persuaded that we were suffering from an attack of Worms — which I am spelling with a big W, since it was a very large ailment in her eyes. To her mind, and in all honesty, the average child was a kind of walking helminthic menagerie, a thin shell of flesh and skin, inclosing hundreds, if not thousands, of Worms! And drastic measures were necessary to keep this raging internal population down to the limits where a child could properly live.

For this bane of juvenile existence, Gram had one constant, sovereign remedy in which she reposed implicit faith, and which she never varied nor departed from, and that was a great spoonful of Van Tassel's Vermifuge, followed four hours later by two great spoonfuls of castor oil. Be it said, too, that the castor oil of that period was the genuine, oily, rank abomination, crude from the bean, and not the "Castoria" of present times, which children are alleged to cry for! And as for Van Tassel's Vermifuge, it resembled raw petroleum, and of all greenish-black, loathly nostrums was the most nauseous to swallow. It was my fixed belief and hope in those youthful years that, if anywhere in the next world there were a deep, dark, super-heated compartment far below all others, it would be reserved expressly for Van Tassel and his Anthelminthic.

Whenever, therefore, any one of us put in an appearance at the breakfast table, looking a little rusty and "pindling," without appetite, Gram would survey the unfortunate critically, with commiseration on her

placid countenance, and exclaim, "The Worms are at work again! Poor child, you are all eaten up by worms! You must take a dose of Vermifuge."

This diagnosis once made, excuses, prayers, sudden assumptions of liveliness, or pseudo exhibitions of ravenous appetite, availed nothing. Gram would rise from the table, walk calmly to the medicine cupboard and fetch out that awful Bottle and Spoon.

With a species of fascination, the Worm-suspect would then watch her turn out the hideous, sticky liquid, till the tablespoon was full and crowning over the brim of it all around. Why, even to this day, as the picture rises in memory, I feel my stomach roll and see the hard, wild grin on the face of Halstead as he watched the ordeal approach me.

"Now shut your eyes and open your mouth," Gram would say, and, when the awful dose was in, "Swallow! Swallow hard!" Then up would come her soft, warm hand under my chin, tilting my head back like a chicken's. There was no escape.

On one occasion Halstead bolted, while the Vermifuge was being poured out, and escaped to the barn. But he had to go without his breakfast that forenoon, and when he appeared at the dinner table, Bottle, Spoon and Gram with a severe countenance were waiting for him.

Theodora used to try to take hers without murmuring, although convinced that it was a mere whim, stipulating only that she might go out in the kitchen to swallow it. But with Wealthy, who was younger, the ingestion of Vermifuge was usually preceded by an orgy of tears and supplications. Addison, who was older and generally well, long smiled in a superior way at the grimaces of us who were more "Wormy." But shortly after our first Thanksgiving Day at the farm, he, too, fell ill and failed to come down to breakfast. On his absence being noted, Gram went up-stairs to inquire into his plight; and it was with

a sense of exultation rather than proper pity, I fear, that Halse and I saw the old lady come down presently and get the Vermifuge Bottle. We heard Addison expostulating and arguing in rebuttal for some minutes, but he lost the case. Wealthy, who had stolen up-stairs on tiptoe, to view the denouement, informed us later, in great glee, that Addison had attempted by a sudden movement to eject the nauseous mouthful, but that Gram had clapped one hand under his chin and pinched his nose with the thumb and finger of the other, till he was compelled to swallow, in order to breathe.

About that time it was hopefully observed that the Bottle was nearly empty. A certain cheerfulness sprang up. It proved short-lived. The next time the Old Squire went to the village, Gram sent for two more bottles. The benevolent smile with which she exhibited the fresh supply to us that night caused our hearts to sink. To have it the handier, she poured both bottlefuls into an empty demijohn and put the Spoon beside it in the cupboard.

Addison, although a pretty good boy in the main, was a crafty one. I never knew, certainly, whether or not Halstead and Ellen had any previous knowledge as to the prank Addison played with the Vermifuge, but I rather think not. There was another large flask-shaped bottle in the same cupboard, about half full of elderberry wine, old and quite thick, which Gram had made years before. It was used only " for sickness," and was always kept on the upper shelf. We knew what it was, however; by the time we had been there a year, there were not many bottles in that or any other cupboard which we had not investigated.

The Vermifuge and the old elderberry wine looked not a little alike, and what Ad must have done — though he never fairly owned up to it — was to shift the thick, dark liquids from one bottle to the other and restore the bottles to their usual places in the cup-

board. Time went on and I think that it was Ellen who had next to take a dose from the Bottle. It was then remarked that she neither shed tears nor made the usual wry faces. Nor yet did she appear in haste to seize and swallow the draught of consolatory coffee from the Old Squire's sympathetic hand. "Why, Nellie girl, you are getting to be quite brave," was his approving comment; and Ellen, with a puzzled glance around the table, laughed, looked earnestly at Gram, but said nothing; I think she had caught Addison's eye fixed meaningly on her.

If recollection serves me aright, I was the next whose morning symptoms indicated the need of Vermifuge; and I remember the thrill of amazement that went through me when the Spoon upset its dark contents adown the roots of my tongue and Gram's cozy hand came up under my chin.

"Why, Gram!" I spluttered. "This isn't—!" "Here, dear boy, take a good swallow of coffee. That'll take the taste out o' your mouth," Gramp interrupted, his own face drawn into a compassionate pucker, and he clapped the cup to my mouth. I drank, but, still wondering, was about to break forth again, when a vigorous kick under the table, led me to take second thought. Addison was regarding me in a queer way, so was Ellen. Gram was placidly putting away the Bottle and Spoon; and something that tingled very agreeably was warming up my stomach. I burst out laughing, but another kick constrained me to preserve silence.

For some reason we did not say anything to each other about this, although I remember feeling very curious concerning that last dose. A species of roguish free-masonry took root among us. Once after that, when Vermifuge was mentioned, Addison winked to me; and I think we were pretty well aware that something funny had started, unbeknown to Gram. Theodora, however, knew nothing of it. Whether

this reprehensible slyness would have continued among the rest of us, until we had taken up the whole of the elderberry wine, I cannot say; but about a month later, a dismal exposé was precipitated one Friday night by the arrival of Elder Witham. There was to be a "quarterly meeting" at the meeting-house Saturday afternoon and Sunday, and the Elder came to the Old Squire's to stay till Monday morning.

Elder Witham was getting on in years; and upon this occasion he had taken a little cold, and being a lean, tall, atra-bilious man, his appetite was affected. Gram, as usual, had prepared a good supper, largely on the Elder's account; but I remember that after we had sat down and the Elder had asked the blessing, he straightened back and said, "Sister S—, I see you've got a nice supper. But I don't believe I can eat a mouthful to-night. I'm all out of fix. I'm afraid I shan't be able to preach to-morrow. If you will not think strange, I want to go back into the sitting-room and lie down a bit on your lounge, to see if I can't feel better."

Gram was much disturbed; she followed the Elder from the table and we overheard her speak of sending for a doctor; but the Elder said no, he guessed that he should soon feel better.

"Well, but Elder Witham, isn't there something I can give you to take?" Gram asked. "Some Jamaica ginger, or something like that?"

"Oh, that is rather too fiery for me," we heard the Elder say.

"Then how would a few swallows of my elderberry wine do?" queried Gram.

"But you know, Sister S—, that I don't much approve of such things," the Elder replied.

"Still, I think really, that it would do you good," urged Gram.

"Perhaps," assented the Elder; for, truth to say, this was not his first introduction to the elderberry

bottle; and we heard Gram go to the medicine cupboard.

And "about this time," as the old almanac used to have it, several of us youngsters at the supper table began to feel strangely interested. Addison glanced across at Ellen, then jumped up suddenly and took a step or two toward the sitting-room, but changed his mind and went hastily out through the kitchen into the woodshed. After a moment or two, Ellen stole out after him. As for myself, mental confusion had fallen on me; I looked at Halse, but he was eating very fast.

The trouble culminated speedily, for it does not take long to turn out a small glass of elderberry wine, or drink it, for that matter. The Elder did not drink it all, however; he took one good swallow, then jumped to his feet and ran to the wood-box. "Sin o' the Jews! What! What! What stuff's this?" he spluttered, clearing his mouth as energetically as possible. "You've given me bug-pizen, by mistake! — and I've swallered a lot of it!"

Inexpressibly shocked and alarmed, Gram could hardly trust the evidence of her senses. She stared helplessly, at first, then all in a tremble, snatched up the bottle, smelled of it, then tasted it.

"My sakes, Elder Witham!" she cried, "but don't be scared, it's only Vermifuge, such as I give the children for Worms!"

"Tsssauh!" coughed the Elder. "But it's nasty stuff, ain't it?"

By this time, Gramp had appeared on the scene, and he fetched a cup of tea to take the taste out of the Elder's mouth. Halstead snatched a handful of cookies off the table and decamped. I could not find anything of Addison or Ellen, and so ventured into the sitting-room, with Theodora and Wealthy.

Gram, the Old Squire and Elder Witham were now holding a species of first-aid council. The Elder had

taken a full swallow of Vermifuge, and after reading the "Directions," they all came to the conclusion that the only safe and proper thing to do was for him to take two tablespoonfuls of castor oil. This was accomplished during the evening; but it was a strangely hushed and completely overawed household. Gram, indeed, was nearly prostrated with mortification. How the Old Squire felt was not quite so clear; as we milked that night, I thought once that I saw him shaking strangely as he sat at his cow which stood next to mine; but I was so shocked myself that I could hardly believe, then, that he was laughing.

Addison helped milk, but immediately disappeared again, and Halse soon retired to bed. Ellen, too, had gone to bed.

Next morning, affairs had not brightened much. Nobody spoke at the breakfast table. The Elder's breakfast was carried in to him, and the net result was that he did not preach that afternoon, as was expected; another minister occupied the pulpit.

Gram gave up going to that quarterly meeting altogether. Shame was near making her ill; and the clouds of chagrin hung low for several days.

It was not till Thursday, following, that Gram recovered her spirits and temper sufficiently to inquire into it. Thursday morning she questioned the whole of us with severity.

Little actual information was elicited, however, for the reason that the most of us knew but little about it. We confessed what we knew, unless, perhaps, Ad kept back something. We all — all except Theodora — knew that we had previously taken elderberry instead of Van Tassel; and Gram gave us an earnest lecture on the meanness of such concealments of facts. The Old Squire said nothing at the time; but I think that he had some private conversation with Addison concerning the matter.

The episode put a damper on the Vermifuge Bottle, however; it was never quite so prominent afterwards. But I have digressed, and gone in advance of my narrative of events at the old farm that season.

CHAPTER VII

IMMERSING THE LAMBS

THE sheep were inclosed at the barn that night, partly that they might not take cold, owing to the sudden loss of their winter coats, partly also that, being pent up close with the lambs, all the parasites ("ticks") would leave the bare skins of the sheep and take refuge within the partly grown fleeces of the lambs — and thus the more readily fall victims to the bath which we had specially prepared for their extermination on the morrow.

Immersing one hundred lambs, one by one, in a tubful of mingled poke and tobacco juice is far from an agreeable task; it was a novelty to me then, however, and I entered into it with much zeal and curiosity. I wanted to see how the lambs would behave, and also how the parasites would enjoy it. A boy's mind is eager for all kinds of visual information.

We put on old clothes, and having set the tub containing the decoction near the lean-to door of the barn, caught and brought forth the lambs, one after another. Addison, by virtue of greater experience, undertook the business of immersion, while Halstead and I caught the lambs. They struggled vigorously, and the only practicable method of dipping them was to grasp all four of their legs, two in each hand, and then thrust them down into the tub, taking care that their noses did not go under the liquid. Each had then to be held in the bath for about a minute, giving time for the liquid to thoroughly saturate their wool. But this was not all, nor yet the most disagreeable

part of the affair. On raising them from the tub, it was necessary to dry their fleeces to some extent, by squeezing and wringing them in our hands, lest, owing to the absorbent capacity of their wool, there should soon be nothing left of our decoction in the tub. Taken with the struggles of the lambs, this proved a repulsive task. Before half the lambs were dipped, our old jacket sleeves were soaked; Withal we were nauseated, either from having our hands in the decoction, or else from the odor which arose from the tub and the wet lambs. At length, Addison was obliged *to go out behind the barn,* where he remained for some minutes, and returned looking very pale. "Good gracious!" he exclaimed. "I think that I shall hate the odor of tobacco juice to the end of my life."

Not long after he made another trip; and immediately I was compelled to follow him, in haste. Halse, who was not much affected, derided us; but he had not held his hands in the tub as much as Addison; besides he was known to have smoked tobacco on several occasions, and this previous experience of the weed, perhaps, stood him in stead on this occasion.

Theodora, who had come out to see how we were progressing, was distressed at our woe-begone condition and ran in to report our sufferings; and as a result of this bulletin, the Old Squire soon made his appearance upon the scene and assumed the rôle of immerser. Gram, too, came out with a dipperful of chamomile tea, of which she authoritatively exhorted us to imbibe a draught.

We judged from appearances that the lambs were also nauseated, for they were observed to stand with drooping heads; and the Old Squire told us that washing either lambs or calves in a strong solution of tobacco had been known to kill them.

Here I may add that the following year we purchased a device for burning tobacco and blowing the

smoke into the wool of the sheep and lambs, called a "fumigator." It was said to be even more destructive to the parasites than the bath of poke and tobacco juices. In point of fact, we found it quite efficacious, also less sloppy and disagreeable to use; but it rendered us even more sick, so ill in fact, that we were fully a day in recovering from the effects. None save a well-seasoned old smoker of tobacco can use the fumigator with impunity.

There had been a "sea-turn" during the morning with the wind southerly, and toward noon it set in rainy. The sheep were turned out to feed for a little while, but at nightfall were driven indoors again. The Old Squire took scrupulous care of his flock during washing and shearing week. A few weeks later we drove the flock down to the barn and touched the nostrils of all the sheep and the older lambs with tar, to prevent a certain species of fly from depositing its eggs and larvae there, causing what was known, later in the year, as "grubs in the head," an affection that often causes many deaths in neglected flocks.

A rainy day is often a farm boy's only holiday. In the afternoon we talked of going down to the lake to fish for pickerel. It came on to rain too heavily, however. Halstead had gone up-stairs to our room, and was hammering at something or other, making a great noise. We heard Addison, who was trying to read in his room, which adjoined, repeatedly begging Halse to desist. Theodora and I played a few games at checkers in the sitting-room, then went up to see Addison. He was reading from Audubon's work on American birds (*Ornithological Biography*), of which he had three volumes that had been his father's; but he did not own the great volumes of engravings which should accompany them, the want of which he often lamented. I remember that he read to us a number of little anecdotes of wild geese, among others how a certain "mighty miller," with a great gun loaded

with rifle balls, had shot geese clean across the Ohio River. He then turned to the description of the heron. "Herons build their nests down in the pines near the lake," said he. "I have asked the Old Squire about making a trip there. He says I can go Saturday afternoon. I would like to have you two and Ellen go with me, but I do not want Halstead. You know how he always cuts up."

"But he will feel hurt if we go without him," Theodora said.

"If he would go and behave himself, I wouldn't say a word against it," replied Addison.

"Perhaps he would this time," said Theodora.

"I don't believe it."

"But he is our cousin, you know."

"The more's the pity, I say."

"But do not say it."

"We shall all say it before long, I'm afraid. Do you know where he goes Sundays?"

"No," said Theodora, with a sigh.

"Well, I do not, but there is something wrong going on. I've thought so for some time. The Old Squire does not know of it."

"I thought he seemed to suspect something last Sunday," said Theodora.

"Yes, but he doesn't see as much as I do."

"Couldn't you find out more about it?" asked Theodora.

"Very likely; but then I do not like to go spying after Halse."

"But perhaps you ought."

"I don't know about that."

They both seemed perplexed. Addison was turning over leaves in the book; and Theodora sat looking at the birds, absently.

"Let's not make any secret about going to see the herons," she said at length. "Even if you don't want to ask Halstead to go, let him know we are going,

and if he wants to go with us, do not say anything against it. We must not shun him, or have him think we do."

It was left like that.

The Old Squire spoke of our going at breakfast the next morning, and I heard Halstead asking Theodora about it afterwards. I knew from what he said that night after we had gone up to bed, that he meant to go.

Saturday was fair. After dinner Addison went up to his room a few minutes, then came down with the gun. Theodora had put on her hat and came out under the trees where I was standing. Seeing us, Addison came along and asked if we were ready. Ellen and little Wealthy also joined us. Halstead was sitting at the front door, and as we started off, he came along, saying, "I guess I'll go, too. Ad forgot to invite me, I suppose."

Addison did not reply, and we went on for some time without speaking.

Leaving the road at the turn by the school-house, we went through the pastures toward the valley of Foy Brook. The great pines in which the herons built stand a little up from the lake. There are several groves of them; many of the trees were gnarled, for which reason the lumbermen had rejected them; some of them were four and five feet in diameter and crooked into fantastic shapes.

Very agreeably and somewhat to our surprise, Halstead was on his good behavior. He was polite to the girls and helped them over the brush fences; and when, on coming nearer the pines, Addison asked us to go in as quietly as we could, he complied, not even allowing a twig to snap under his feet.

Addison wished to see the herons undisturbed; and the rest of us kept a little to the rear while he went on cautiously. Presently he stopped, then turned and whispered to us to come up quietly behind him and

look over his shoulder. "Up there," said he, pointing into the top of one of the pines. In a fork, formed by the very highest branches, there was a great mass of sticks and reeds as large as a two-bushel basket.

"That's one of the nests," whispered Addison. "And see that head and long, pointed beak, just over the top of it! The old hen heron is brooding."

"But look there!" whispered Halstead, pointing into another tree.

On a high, dead limb stood a heron on one long leg, perfectly motionless. The other foot was drawn up so as to be hidden in the feathers of the under part of its body. Its neck was crooked back so far that its long bill rested on its breast. It was seemingly asleep, and looked so ungainly that Ellen laughed outright, despite Addison's injunctions to be quiet.

Several other nests were presently discovered, high up among the green boughs.

"If you want to shoot one, to stuff," whispered Halstead, "you will not get a better chance than that," pointing to the one asleep. "He is just in good easy range."

"It seems too bad to shoot him, while he is sleeping," said Theodora.

"Once let him wake up and see us, and he will make himself scarce in a hurry," said Halstead. "Better make sure of him, Ad."

Addison cocked the gun, and, raising it slowly, fired. The great bird uttered a hoarse squawk, straightened up, then toppled over and fell to the ground. Instantly there arose a deafening chorus of squawks. Herons flew up from the tree tops all about us. The tops of the pines fairly rocked. Great sticks, dirt and cones came rattling down. Upward they soared in a great flock, several hundred feet above the trees, then flew around and around overhead, uttering hoarse cries.

We ran to the place where the wounded heron had

fallen. He lay extended on the ground; but a bright sinister eye was turned up, watching us with silent defiance.

"Don't go too near," said Addison. "He will strike with his beak. You know I read to you, from Audubon, how a gentleman came near losing an eye from the sudden stroke of a wounded heron. They always aim for the eye."

He put out the butt of the gun, extending it slowly toward the bird. The heron watched it till within a couple of feet, then struck quick as thought, darting its bill against the hard walnut of the gunstock.

Meanwhile the other herons had flown off to the side of the mountain, half a mile away. Now and then one would come back and circle about over the pines.

Addison desired to examine a nest. One of the pines had low knots on the trunk, within six feet of the ground, and a little higher up drooping branches. There was a nest near the top. Halstead offered to climb up to it. Addison and I lifted him up to the knots. He climbed up by these to the lowest limbs, and then went on from branch to branch toward the top.

"Two eggs!" he shouted, peeping over into the great nest.

"Don't break them!" cried Addison. "Bring them down if you can!"

Halstead took them out and put them into his loose frock, then, before we guessed what he was going to do, he had upset the nest from the branches in which it rested, and it came bumping down through the boughs to the ground. The fall shook it to pieces considerably, yet we could see what its shape had been. There were some sticks in it three and four feet long, as thick as a man's wrist. The inside was lined with dry grass. It was large enough to allow the old heron to double its long legs and sit in it comfortably. Halse now came down with the eggs. They

were of a dirty white color, the shells rough and uneven. Theodora imagined that they would be as large as goose-eggs; they were not larger than those of a turkey, — about two and a half inches in length by one and a half in width.

"I shall carry them home and hatch them under a hen," said Addison.

"I guess the old hen will cackle when she sees what she has hatched," exclaimed Ellen, laughing.

While we were looking at them, a noise in the brush startled us, and, turning hastily, we saw a young man wearing a glazed cap standing at the border of alders, near the brook. His appearance startled us somewhat. Presently we noticed that he was beckoning, evidently to Halstead, and that the latter seemed very uneasy; he bent over the eggs and pretended not to see any one. But the fellow continued loitering there; and at last Halse jumped up, saying, "I'll see what he wants, I guess," and went out to the alders. The man stepped back and they both disappeared among the bushes.

We stood waiting for some minutes, then started to go slowly out through the pines into the pasture and homeward with our trophies.

"Who could that have been?" Ellen exclaimed to Addison in a low voice; but Addison merely shook his head.

Somewhat to our surprise, we found Halstead at home in advance of us; he had already sat down to supper with Gramp and Gram.

That night, after milking was done and we had gone up-stairs to our room, Halstead said to me, "I suppose you saw that fellow that came to see me down at the pines this afternoon."

I said yes.

"That was a poor chap I promised to buy some seed-corn for," Halse went on, hastily. "He came around to get the money; and I'm going to try to make it

up somehow, though I haven't got the money just now. Couldn't let me have seventy-five cents, could you?"

I said that I could, for I felt relieved to think that the mysterious person was merely a poor farmer.

Halstead regarded me for some moments. "I wish you would ask Doad and Nell if they won't lend me a quarter apiece," he said at length. "I can just make it up, if you would. I hate to ask them myself. But I will give it back to you in the course of a month.

"I wouldn't say anything to Ad about it," Halstead went on; "Ad don't like me and I don't want to feel beholden to him for anything."

I replied that I did not feel quite well enough acquainted with Theodora and Ellen yet, to ask such a favor; but as Halstead seemed to feel hurt that I hesitated about it, I finally promised to speak to them, although I disliked the errand.

Next day was Sunday, and after breakfast we all set off, except Ellen and Gram, to go to the old meeting-house, called the "chapel," three miles distant, on a road leading westward from the farm. It was a very hilly road, and we three boys walked; but Theodora and Wealthy rode with the Old Squire in the two-seated wagon.

I had been accustomed to go to church in a more handsomely furnished edifice, and the old chapel seemed, at first, very rude to me. It was a weather-beaten structure, having a high gallery across one end and an almost equally high pulpit at the other. The floor was bare, and the box-shaped pews were not many of them provided with cushions. There was a great clatter of feet when the people came in, and the roof gave back hollow echoes.

The Old Squire and Gram were nominally Congregationalists, and the old meeting-house had once belonged to that sect; but becoming reduced in numbers, and being unable to support a clergyman of that de-

nomination during the entire year, they had allowed the Methodists, and finally the Second Adventists, to hold meetings there.

The Old Squire, indeed, was by no means a strict sectarian; he attended the Methodist service and sometimes, not often, the Adventist. Gram was more conservative and did not go, as a rule, except when there was a Congregationalist minister, although she always spoke well of the Methodists; and the Methodist Elder Witham (the same who took the Vermifuge) frequently visited at the farm.

"All Christians are good people," Gramp was accustomed to say.

"Well," Gram would reply, placidly, "I cannot help believing that we (meaning the Congregationalists) are in the right."

The Old Squire's chief objection to the Adventists was, that their preachers had come into the place uninvited, and, by their zealous efforts, had caused a considerable number to withdraw from the church, thus breaking up the Congregationalist Society in that town.

"I do not take it upon me to say who is right and who is wrong on these great religious questions," the old gentleman used to remark, when the subject came up. "But I disapprove of sowing the seeds of dissension in any church." However, he used sometimes to go to hear the Adventists' ministers.

It was Elder Witham's turn to preach that Sunday. He was a tall, spare man, and he preached in a long linen "duster." For one I became quite a good deal interested in the sermon, for the preacher began very pleasantly by telling us several short anecdotes. Toward the close of his discourse, he became very earnest and raised his voice quite near the shouting pitch.

During intermission, there was an attempt made to organize a Sunday school. The boys and girls were

seated in classes in the pews, and teachers were appointed from the older members of the church.

There was a small Sunday-school library, consisting of quaint little books with marbled covers. Each of us was permitted to carry home one of these small volumes; and I recollect that my book that Sabbath was entitled *Herman's Repentance*.

The Elder rode home with our folks to tea, and Theodora walked with us boys. There were six or eight others walking with us, the sons and daughters of neighbors, to whom Theodora kindly introduced me: Georgie and Elsie Wilbur, very pretty girls of about Ellen's age, also their brother Edgar, near my own age, and a large, awkward but smiling youngster, whose name was Henry Sylvester, whom the others called "Bub." An older boy of rather swaggering manners overtook us on our way, and began talking patronizingly to me, without an introduction. His name was Alfred Batchelder. We also overtook a boy named Willis Murch, who had stopped to sit, waiting for us, on a large rock beside the road. The Murch family lived a mile beyond the Old Squire's to the northwest.

The quiet of the walk homeward was somewhat broken in upon, however, by a scuffle and some hard words betwixt Halstead and Alfred Batchelder.

As we came near the great gate opening into our lane, Theodora walked up to the house with me, a little behind the others, and told me, confidentially — for my good, I suppose — that Alfred Batchelder was deemed a reckless chap whose character was not above reproach. I, on my part, seized the opportunity to proffer Halstead's petition for the loan of twenty-five cents.

"I could lend it to him," she replied, "and so can Ellen, I think."

But she seemed thoughtful, and by and by asked me to tell her all that Halstead had said. I did so,

and added that he did not wish Addison to know about it.

" I am sorry for that," she said, " for I should like to ask Ad's advice. But I suppose we had better not tell him, if Halse is unwilling."

Later that evening she gave me the money, along with twenty-five cents from Ellen. I handed it to Halstead that night, a dollar and a quarter in all. He appeared much pleased.

" Does Ad know it, or the old gent? " he asked me, and cried, " Good! " when I said they did not.

He sat on the side of the bed and tossed up the five quarter pieces, catching them as they fell.

" I know a way to get plenty of these fellers," he remarked to me at length.

" What makes you borrow of the girls, then? " I asked.

" O, you needn't be scared. I'll soon pay you all," he retorted.

But I had begun to doubt that the money was to pay for a poor farmer's seed-corn.

CHAPTER VIII

"OLD THREE-LEGS"

MONDAY morning dawned bright and very warm. As we were about to sit down to breakfast, Catherine Edwards called at the door and left a letter for me, from my mother, which had arrived at the Corners post-office on Saturday, but which Neighbor Edwards, who had brought the mail for us late that evening, had overlooked; my letter had consequently lain over, in his coat pocket, until that morning, when he had chanced to discover it.

My mother had written me a very nice letter, as such letters go, exhorting me to good behavior in general; and if she had stopped short at that point, it would have been better. She went on, however, to tell me of affairs at home, of what she was doing, of "Bush," our cat, of the canary, of three or four boys and girls with whom I was acquainted, and also of a grand parade of returned soldiers.

I had not half finished it, when I was seized with such a pang of homesickness as I hope never to feel again; in fact, I do not believe that I ever could feel another such pang. It penetrated my entire being; I could not swallow a mouthful of breakfast. It seemed to me that I should choke and die right there, if I did not get up and start for home that very minute; — and I knew I could not go. Blue is no adequate word with which to describe such sensations. In the course of an hour, however, this first fit passed off for the most part, but left me very pensive and melancholy.

I was aware, too, that the Old Squire had noticed my mood.

As we hoed corn that forenoon, a boy came driving a horse and "drag" into the field; it was Edgar Wilbur, one of the lads whom I had seen the day before while coming from church. The Wilburs lived at the farm next beyond the Edwardses, about three-quarters of a mile distant from us. Mr. Wilbur was not a wholly thrifty farmer, and often borrowed tools at the Old Squire's. Edgar had now come for the "cultivator," for their corn.

While we were loading it on the drag for him, Edgar told us boys that he had to go to the back pasture to salt their sheep that afternoon, and asked us to go with him. Addison replied that we were too busy with our hoeing; but the Old Squire, who had overheard what was said, looked at me with a compassionate smile, and said that I might go if I liked. I suppose he hoped that the trip with Edgar would cheer me up. Accordingly, after dinner, I was given my liberty, and set off for the Wilburs, leaving Halstead grumbling over what he deemed my unmerited good fortune.

The Wilburs lived in a one-story red house; and their barn was a somewhat weather-beaten, infirm old structure, yet the place had a cozy appearance; there were beds of flowers by the house door, and a great bunch of pink hedge roses on one side of the way leading into the yard, with a thick bush of lilacs on the other. Elsie and Georgie were at the district school; but Mrs. Wilbur, a fresh-faced, pleasant woman, came to the door and very kindly asked me in, offering me presently a glass of spruce beer which had a queer flavor, I thought, and which I was not quite able to finish.

Meantime Edgar — or Ned, as his mother called him — had filled a six-quart pail with salt, and we set off immediately for the sheep pasture. The dis-

tance was considerable, fully a mile; we first crossed their hay fields, then a cow pasture and then a belt of woodland, through which ran a cart road. Gradually ascending a considerable slope of the woodland, we came out upon the cleared crest of a long ridge. This was the "back pasture;" it was inclosed by a high hedge fence, made of short, dry, spruce shrubs. This fence we climbed, and then Edgar began calling the sheep, — "Ca-day, ca-day, ca-day, ca-day," stopping at intervals to give me various items of information as to their flock and the extent of the pasture. The Murches, who lived on the farm next beyond the Wilburs, pastured their sheep with them, in this same back pasture; they had a flock of thirty-eight, while the Wilburs had thirty-three, but there were over a hundred lambs. Every spring the two farmers and the boys repaired, or rebuilt, the high hedge fence in company. The pasture was of seventy-five acres extent, Edgar said; but it was much broken by crags and grown up to patches of dark, low spruce.

Altogether it was a very wild locality, wholly inclosed by somber forests; and from the top of one of the ledges, which I climbed, I could see no cleared land, far or near, save on the side next to their farms, and that at quite a distance. This ledge, I recollect, had a vein of white quartz running across it, displaying at one point a trace of rose-color; and I remember thinking that some time I would come here and break out specimens of this handsome stone.

At length in response to Ned's calls, we heard a faint *ba-a-a,* toward the north end of the pasture, and going in that direction, past a number of spruce copses and many other ledges, we came in sight of the flock of sheep, feeding in a hollow near a spring. A great mob of lambs were following their mothers and frisking about the rocks; and there was one black sheep and one black lamb which, at first sight, I thought were dogs or some other animals. "That black sheep is

Murches'," Ned said. "She's got two lambs; but that black lamb is in our flock. There's South Down blood in a good many of them. You can tell the South Downs by their black fore legs and smut faces. There's fifteen pairs of twins in our flock and about as many in Murches'. Ca-day, ca-day, ca-day."

Catching sight of us and the salt pail, the flock now came crowding eagerly about us. The ovine odor was very strong. Black flies troubled the poor creatures grievously, and another larger, evil-looking fly was buzzing about their noses.

"We are coming up in a day or two and tar all their noses," said Ned, dealing out the salt in numerous handfuls, throwing it down on smooth spots upon the grass, and running backwards to avoid the onward rush of the sheep.

"Now let's count 'em," he continued. "We always count 'em when we salt 'em. Let's see, can you reckon good? Murches have got thirty-eight sheep and fifty-three lambs, and we've got thirty-three sheep and forty-eight lambs. How many does that make in all?"

After some cogitation, we agreed that there must be seventy-one sheep and a hundred and one lambs, or a hundred and seventy-two all told. That was what there should be; and we now set out to ascertain by counting if all were there.

This was a greater feat than would appear at first thought, the flock was so crowded together and so constantly running about. We made several attempts, but as many times lost the count, or grew confused. At length, we drove the sheep apart, and the salt being eaten by this time, we contrived to enumerate eighty-two on one side and eighty-seven on the other.

"Now how many's that?" said Ned. I could not make but a hundred and sixty-nine from it; but Ned said that he guessed 'twas more. After studying on it awhile, however, he agreed with me; and we then

counted the flock again, twice more, in fact, before we were both satisfied that there were but a hundred and sixty-nine present.

"Now that's bad," said Ned.

"What suppose has become of them?" I asked.

"Dogs, maybe," replied Ned, "or else a 'lucivee,' or a bear."

"Perhaps 'twas men," I suggested.

"O no, I don't think that," said Ned. "If 'twas in the fall, I should think it might be, for there are some folks down at the Corners that have been laid in stealing sheep. But let's see whether it's sheep or lambs that's gone, and whose 'tis, whether it's ours or Murches'. Now all our sheep have got two slits in the right ear and a crop off the left; but Murches' have a crop off both ears; and all our lambs have got red paint across the fore shoulders, but Murches' have got red on the rump." This necessitated a new count and a much more difficult one.

"I'll count the ones with slits and crops," said Ned; "and you count the ones with two crops." But we were nearly half an hour establishing the fact that one of the "two crops" was missing.

"It is one of Murches' sheep that's gone," said Ned; "I'm glad it isn't ours." We then counted the lambs and found also that the missing ones were two of the Murches'.

"It's an old sheep with twins," said Ned.

"Isn't she off by herself somewheres?" I asked.

"Not very likely to be unless she's got hung; they always keep together," replied Ned. "But she may have got hung in the brush, or else has tumbled in between big rocks and can't get out. I suppose we ought to look her up if that's so.

"I'll tell you what we will do," continued Ned; "we will walk clean round the pasture, in the first place, keeping where we can see the fence, for she may be hung in it."

Thereupon we set off to walk around the pasture, going along the farther side to the northwest and the southwest first. The fence skirted the thick bushes and woods. Toward the southwest corner there was a long, craggy ledge a little within the pasture fence. It fell off, rough, rocky and almost perpendicular on that side, from a height of fifteen or twenty feet, and about the foot of the crag were many of the low, black spruces, but from the upper side one could walk out on the bare, smooth rocks to the very brink of the ledge. We approached from this upper side, and as we came out on it, to look down into the corner of the pasture, a crow cawed suddenly and sharply, and we saw three crows rise, flapping, off the ground, below the crag.

"Hoh!" Ned exclaimed. "What are those black chaps up to there?"

We stopped and looked down attentively into the partly open plat of pasture, inclosed around on the lower side by the seared, reddish line of the now dried hedge fence.

"Why, Ned, see the wool down there on the ground!" I cried, as a white mass caught my eye.

"Something's killed the sheep there!" replied Ned, in a low tone. "See the head there and the meat and bones strung along. Something's killed her and eaten her half up; and there looks to be part of a lamb farther along by that little fir."

A very strange sensation, partly fear, stole over me, as we stood there looking down upon the torn remains of the sheep and lamb. The place was far off in the woods and the surroundings were wild and somber. There was something uncanny, too, in the way those crows rose up and went flapping away. In less degree, I think Ned experienced similar sensations, for he stood without speaking for a moment, then said, "O it may have been done by a dog, or maybe she died.

"Let's climb down and see what we can see," he continued.

"We can see that the sheep is dead from up here," I replied, for I did not like the idea of going down there very well.

"Come along," said Ned, laughing. "You needn't be afraid."

"I'm not afraid," said I. "But it is a kind of lonesome looking place."

"Yes, 'tis," replied Ned, stopping for a little to look again. "But let's go down and see. They'll ask us all about it, and we've got to find out what we can."

He walked along the top of the ledge, and, coming to a place where we could descend between some large split rocks, began to climb down. I followed after him, a little in the rear. Ned had got down among the small spruces, at the foot of the crag, when he suddenly called back to me that one of the lambs was there. "Poor little chap, he's hid here, under the brush," he continued; and on getting down, I saw the lamb standing far under the thick, dark boughs.

"I never saw a lamb hide in that way before," said Ned. "He's been awful scared by something."

"We crept around and tried to catch the lamb; it ran along the foot of the rocks among the evergreens, but did not bleat, nor behave at all as lambs generally do.

"He's got blood on his side there," remarked Ned. "But he may have got that off the old sheep."

After looking at the lamb a moment, Ned started to go down where the carcass of the sheep lay, but I felt a little timid and stood still, near the foot of the rocks.

It was not far to go, not more than a hundred feet, I think, being about half way down to the thick, reddish hedge of recently cut spruce. Ned approached within a few yards and after looking at the fleece and bones a minute, stopped to pick up a wisp of wool,

when from right at hand there burst forth the most frightful growl that I ever heard. It broke on the utter stillness of that quiet nook like a thunder peal and it so wrought on my already alert senses that I yelled outright from sudden terror!

For the moment I could not have told from what quarter the terrible sound came, for the high rocks behind me reverberated it. Following instantly upon the growl, however, we heard a cracking of the brush in the thicket below the hedge fence; and next moment there issued through a hole in it a large black animal of terrific aspect, that to my startled eyes looked as large as an ox!

Not that I stopped to estimate its size. I was on the move by the time it had issued from the hole of the hedge fence; — but a boy's eye will take in a good deal at one glance, under such circumstances. It was a steep ascent betwixt the rocks to the top of the ledge; but if I had possessed wings, I could not have got up much more quickly. As I gained the top, I thought of striking off for the upper side of the pasture, and thence running for my life toward the farms; but at the same instant my eye fell on a low-growing oak, a few rods away, the lower limbs of which I thought that I could jump up and seize. I had started for it, but had taken only a bound or two, when I heard Ned say, "Hold on," behind me. I looked back. He had gained the top of the ledge almost as quickly as I had, but had stopped there. "Hold on," he exclaimed in a low voice. I stopped and stood, half breathless and panting, ready to bound away again and half inclined to do so.

Ned was looking down from the ledge and motioned to me with his hand to return. After some hesitation, I tiptoed back to him.

"See him?" he whispered to me. "He's right there behind that little spruce, close beside the sheep. He's looking up here and harking!" The black ani-

mal was half hidden by the spruce boughs, yet I could see him, and experienced a curious nervous thrill as I made out its shaggy outlines.

"Isn't it a bear?" I whispered.

"Cracky, yes," whispered Ned. "A big one, too!"

"But won't he chase us?"

"Guess not," replied Ned. "Ye see, 'tis the sheep he felt so mad about. He'd killed the sheep and that lamb last night, I expect, and eaten them part up. And he had only gone down there a little way into the firs behind the fence and was kinder watching till he got hungry again. He saw and heard us come along, but he kept still and didn't say a word till he saw me stoop down to touch it. Then, sir, he just spoke right out in meetin'! Told me to get out and let his meat alone. O, don't I wish I had a good gun, loaded with a ball!"

"Would you dare to fire at him, Ned?" I said.

"Well," replied Ned, doubtfully, looking around and seeing the oak, and then glancing down the rocks, "I dunno, but I believe I would get good aim and let strip at him. If I hit him and hurt him, but didn't kill him, he might come for us, lickety switch. But he couldn't get up here very quick. We should have time to climb that tree."

"I wish we could shoot him!" I whispered, beginning to wax warlike.

"I've a great mind to let a stone go down there," said Ned, looking about. "Let's both get stones and throw at once, and see what he will do. If he starts up here, we'll put for that tree."

This was an extremely exciting proposition, but I was getting bolder. We found each a stone as big as a coffee-cup.

"Now both together," whispered Ned, and we flung them with all our power. We did not hit our mark, but they struck the ground near the spruce and bounced past it, quite closely. The bear growled

again, savagely, and started stiffly out from his covert, past the remains of the sheep. We both turned to run, but noticing that the creature had stopped, we pulled up again. The bear saw us and growled repeatedly, yet did not come far past his jealously guarded treasure. He shuffled about, keeping his head drawn down in a peculiar manner, but we could see that his eye was on us. After a few moments, he drew back behind the spruce again. Thereupon we threw more stones; and again the beast rushed out, growling and scratching up the grass in an odd manner; he did not appear inclined to pursue us, however, and we now noticed that there was something clumsy in its gait, like a limp.

"Gracious!" Ned suddenly exclaimed. "That's old 'Three-Legs!' He's come round again!"

"What, the bear that lost his foot in a trap?" I asked, remembering what Ellen and Theodora had told me a few days before.

"Yes, siree!" cried Ned. "He's an awful old sheep-killer! He comes round once in a while. But he's mighty cunning! He's a savage one, too, but he can't run very fast."

"Then let's pelt him!" I exclaimed.

"No, no," said Ned. "We must hurry back home and raise a crew. That bear must be killed, you know. If we don't, he will come round every week and take a sheep all summer."

We therefore set off in haste, to run to the Wilbur farm, where we arrived very hot and out of breath just as the family was sitting down to supper. "Old 'Three-Legs' is in the sheep pasture!" shouted Ned at the door. "Get the gun, pa! I'm going to tell the Murches!"

Mr. Wilbur owned a gun, but it was not in shooting condition. We then ran down the hill to the Murch farm, and there our story created considerable excitement. Ben and Willis at once brought out a double-

barrelled gun, which their father proceeded to load, but they lacked bullets and heavy shot. Willis and Ned and I therefore ran to the Edwardses to notify Thomas and his father and procure ammunition. At the Edwardses they had both shot and also a musket which carried balls. This latter weapon was at once charged for bear.

Mr. Edwards, however, advised me to go home and notify the Old Squire and Addison, in order that they, too, might join the hunt, if disposed.

I set off at a run again; but by this time I had become not a little leg-weary; night, too, was at hand. The boys were milking, and I met the Old Squire coming toward the house with two brimming pailfuls. "Old 'Three-Legs' has just killed one of Murches' sheep and a lamb, too!" I shouted.

"Is that so?" said the old gentleman, but the intelligence did not excite him so much as I had expected it would. He looked at me and said, "You look badly heated. You have run too hard."

"But that old bear's killed a sheep!" I exclaimed. "They are all going after him. They sent me to get you and the boys."

By this time Addison and Halstead had risen off their milking stools to hear the tidings, and exhibited signs of interest.

"Did you see the bear, my son?" the Old Squire asked.

"Yes, siree!" I exclaimed, and thereupon I poured forth all the particulars. "They want all of us to load our guns and go with them," I cried expectantly.

"Well," remarked the Old Squire, with what seemed to me a very provoking lack of enthusiasm. "If they are all going, I guess they will not need us. You had better go to the well and wash your face and head in some cold water, then rest a while and have your supper; it has been a very hot day."

"But old Three-Legs!" I exclaimed. "He may get away!"

"Yes, he may," said Gramp, laughing. "I should not wonder if he did.

"I will tell you something about bears, my son," he went on, good-naturedly. "A bear is quite a knowing animal, and sometimes very cunning. This one they call old 'Three-Legs' is remarkably so. I'm very sure that, if we all went over there as quick as we could, and stayed around all night, we shouldn't find him. That bear knew just as well as you did that you had gone to get help and would be back with it; and I shouldn't wonder if by this time he was three miles away — and still going. What that bear did after you and Ned left was to listen awhile, till he made sure you were gone, then stuff himself with as much more of that mutton as he could hold, and leave the place as fast as he could go. He's gone, you may depend upon it; — and he will not come near that place again for a week or two probably. That is bear nature and bear wit. They seem to know some things almost as well as men. They know when they kill sheep that men will make a fuss about it. That bear was lying quiet there, with his ears open for trouble; he wasn't much afraid of two boys, but he knows there are men and guns not far off."

I was really very tired and after hearing this view of the case was not much sorry to rest and have my supper. We learned next day that Thomas and his father, and Ned and the Murches went over to the pasture with their guns, but they failed to find the bear. The Murches set a trap at the place where the sheep had been killed, and kept it there for ten days. A hound was caught in it, but no bear.

I remember that my sleep that night was somewhat disturbed by exciting dreams of hunting. At the breakfast table next morning I told the story of our adventure over again, and described the ugly demon-

strations of the bear at such length, that I presently saw grandfather smiling, and detected Addison giving a sly wink to Theodora. This confused me so much that I stopped in haste and was more cautious about my realistic descriptions in future. Halstead began hectoring me that forenoon concerning my adventure, and nicknamed me "the great bear hunter." Much incensed, I retorted by asking him whether he had paid for that seed-corn. Hearing that, Addison, who was near us, cast an inquiring look at Halstead, and the latter hurriedly changed the subject; he was unusually polite to me for several days afterwards.

CHAPTER IX

HOMESICK AGAIN. BLUE, OH, SO BLUE!

THE jaunt with Edgar and the excitement about old "Three-Legs" had distracted my thoughts for the time being, but had not cured me of homesickness. Two days later my mother sent me by mail my book of arithmetic, the one I had recently used at school; she thought that I might attend the district school in Maine and need it.

Now there is not usually much in a text-book of arithmetic that excites fond memories in a boy of thirteen. Often the reverse. But I had no sooner taken that well-thumbed book from its wrapping of brown paper, than another pang of homesickness went through me; and this time it was nostalgia in earnest.

If, at this moment, there is anywhere in the United States, or in the whole world, a boy or girl who is homesick, I know how to pity each and all of them. I do not suppose that my pity will do them much good. Nothing does much good. But I know exactly how they feel, and they have my heartiest sympathy.

Whoever ridicules and laughs at any one who is truly homesick must have a hard heart and a shallow mind. It is no laughing matter. Homesickness is something midway between a physical disease and a mental worry. It has a real, physiological cause, and is due to the inability of the brain to adapt itself, without a struggle, to the strangeness of new scenes and new surroundings; and that struggle is often a very painful one.

Homesickness had not fallen upon me at first, there

were so many new things to see, so many new cousins and young neighbors to get acquainted with. For a time my attention was wholly taken up with the novelties of the place. The farm, the cattle, the birds, the work which we had to do, everything, in fact, was novel. Perhaps for that very reason, when the mental struggle to really adapt myself to it came, it was the more profound and severe.

That morning I had no sooner unwrapped this old book than the pang began again. I could not swallow a mouthful of breakfast. It really seemed to me that I should die right then and there if I did not get up and start for home.

Blue is no adequate word with which to describe what I suffered. It came upon me with a suddenness, too, which nearly took my breath with it. At the table were the bright, cheery faces of my cousins, and of the Old Squire and Gram; but for the moment, how saddening, poor and dreary everything looked to me! The thought of remaining there, month after month, gave me heart-sink like death.

Kind parent, if you have a boy or girl off at school, or anywhere at a distance, whom you wish to be happy and content, do not write very much to them, and above all things do not go on to tell them of home affairs, home scenes and familiar objects. It is mistaken kindness. It might possibly answer — if a boy — to speak of a woodpile soon to be sawn; or — if a girl — to allude to great heaps of dishes to be washed; but I would not even advise much of that, nor anything else in the least suggestive of home scenes; in fact, write as little as possible.

I remember, as I sat there at table, unable to eat, or even to swallow my coffee, that Cousin Theodora glanced compassionately at me, and Ellen and Addison curiously. They surmised what ailed me, from their own previous experience, but said nothing. The Old Squire and Gram, too, wisely forebore to stir me

by foolishly expressed sympathy. How glad I was that they did not speak to me!

The day passed drearily enough, and as evening drew on, still gloomier shadows fell into my mind. I stole away to read my mother's letter again and be alone with my trouble. Billow after billow of the blackest misery broke over me. I went out into the garden, then around to the back side of the west barn; the darkening landscape was not more somber than my heart. How unspeakably dreary the dim, weathered old barn, the shadowy hills and forests looked to me! Not less dreary seemed my whole future. I felt exiled. It appeared to me that I should never know another happy moment, that I never could, by any possibility, enjoy myself again. I sat down on a stone, in the dark, put my head in my hands, and gave myself up to the most somber reflections. Cold despair crept into me at every pore. A fever of tears then filled my eyes. I laid wild plans to escape; I would run away that very night and go home. The distance, as I knew, was about five hundred miles; but I was sure that I could walk twenty miles per day, perhaps thirty. In twenty days I could reach home. I did not think much about food by the way; it did not appear to me that I should want to touch a mouthful of anything eatable till I reached home. If I did so far desire, I fancied that I might gather a few berries by the wayside. Then I began to plan the details of setting off. I would go indoors and put on my other suit of clothes, after the family were asleep; and not to be too mean and cause too much anxiety, I determined to write a few words on a bit of paper and slip it under Theodora's door, advising them all not to worry about me, as I had gone home, "for a time." These latter words I concluded to add, by way of breaking it a little more gently to them, not that I had the slightest intention of ever returning.

As I sat there with my hands over my face, plan-

ning, and brewing hot tears, I heard a step in the grass, and looking up, saw a tall, shadowy figure which I knew must be the Old Squire.

"Is that you, 'Edmund?'" he said, as I jumped up off the stone. He still called me that sometimes. "It is a close night, I declare," he continued. "I had about as lief be out here in the cool myself, as in the house abed. But the mosquitoes bite a little, don't they?"

I had neither noticed that the evening was hot, nor yet that there were any mosquitoes; I was quite insensible to ordinary physical influences.

The old gentleman lay down on the grass beside me. "Let's lay and talk a spell," said he. "I never come round back of the barn here, but that I think of the fox I shot when I was a young man. That fox had a 'brush' as big 'round as your leg, the biggest fox-tail I ever saw. He had been coming around the barns for some time; I used to hear him bark, mornings, about four o'clock."

The Old Squire then went on, at length, to tell me how he watched for the fox, and how he loaded the old "United-States-piece" musket for it, and how he finally fired and shot the fox, but that the gun nearly broke his collar-bone, he had loaded it so heavily. He was nigh half an hour telling me all about it, and in spite of myself, I grew somewhat interested.

"Why, how these mosquitoes do bite!" he finally exclaimed, giving one a rousing slap. "Let's go in before they eat us up, and go to bed."

I went in with him and went to bed, but my trouble had now cankered too deeply to be easily calmed. In the blackness of the bedchamber it beset me again. Like other maladies, nostalgia, when once set up, must run its course, I suppose. It never has appeared to me that I slept at all that night, yet perhaps I did. Long before daylight, however, I was again shedding hot tears and laying wild plans. But my thoughts had

now taken on an even gloomier and more desperate shade. What was the use of my going home, I thought; my mother did not want me there. What was the use of living in such a hopelessly dreary world! Live there at the Old Squire's I could not, would not; of that I was certain. I never could endure it. The thought of existing there, as I then felt, week after week and month after month, was simply unbearable. Better die at once. I began to think of various cases of suicide of which I had heard, or read — in my happier days: the rope, poison, drowning. The latter I believed to be the easier method of death; and I thought of the Little Sea down where we washed the sheep and had begun to go in swimming on warm days. There was water enough there in the deepest place; — and once in, it would soon be over!

As the hours of the night dragged by, I began to take a morbid pleasure in thinking about it, as if I had fully decided the question. I really believed that I had as good as decided to drown myself; and when at length we were called at five o'clock, I rose to dress in a very unhealthy frame of mind.

"What's the matter with you?" exclaimed Halstead, as we were putting on our shoes.

"Nothing," said I, heavily.

"You look as if you had lost your best friend," said he, with an unsympathetic grin.

"I shall lose something more than that before long," I replied, with a miserable effort at mystery.

"You don't say!" cried he, ironically, and went out with an air of hard indifference, not at all flattering to my self-love.

How poor and undesirable the house, the farm, the whole world, looked to me that morning. I plodded about, assisting to do the early chores; I really had no appetite for my breakfast, and stole away from the table after a few moments. Gram called after me, to know if I were unwell; I did not dare trust my-

self to reply, lest I should burst forth weeping, and hastening out to the Balm o' Gilead trees, stood looking down the lane a moment, with a dreadful tumult of repressed misery raging within me. My mental malady had reached a crisis; I was wild with anguish. It appeared to me that I never could endure it. One thought only kept its place in my mind — the Little Sea! I stole away down the lane, crossed the road, then went on through the east field and pasture, till I reached the brook.

Not that I now believe there was much likelihood of my drowning myself. Even if I had been wretched enough to jump in, the first spoonful of cold water in my nose would probably have sent me scrambling out, as would have been the case with hundreds who have really drowned themselves, if only they had not jumped into too deep water. But I wanted to do something or other very desperate, what, I hardly knew myself. As I ran, I debated whether I should take off my clothes, or drown with them on; I did not remember reading how suicides of hydropathic tendencies had managed that detail. The boys would find my body Sunday morning when they came down to bathe, I thought. Yet some one else might find me; and it seemed more decent and proper to drown with them on. I walked around the Little Sea and singled out the deepest place in it, where there was four or five feet of water. It looked to be fully sufficient.

There was now nothing to prevent my going ahead with my project; but since I had looked into the water and saw how aqueous it appeared, considered as a place to spend from that morning on till Sunday in, haste did not seem altogether so desirable, and I was not in nearly so great a hurry. I sat down on a stone to think it over once more. It would be unbecoming, I recollected, to take such a step without mental preparation.

Still, I actually did half believe that when I rose

from that stone, I should plunge into the pond. I imagine that I sat there for more than half an hour, and very likely should have remained much longer had the Old Squire not made his appearance, glancing curiously over the dam, a few rods below me.

It struck me as a little singular that he should be there so early and so very soon after breakfast. He had an axe on his shoulder, however, and it occurred to me that it might possibly be that he was there to mend the pasture fence. When he saw me sitting there, he smiled broadly, and coming nearer said, "Oh, this isn't nearly so good a brook for fishing as the other one on the west side."

"'Fishing!'" thought I. "How little he knows what brought me here! Can he not see that I haven't a pole?"

"Don't know exactly why," he continued, retrospectively, "but there never were nearly so many trout here as in the west brook. I meant to have given you and Addison a day to go over there before now, but work has been rather pressing ever since you came."

I rose from the stone, thinking — and not wholly sorry to think — that suicide must necessarily be postponed for that day, at least; for I could not, of course, harrow the old gentleman's feelings by plunging into the Little Sea before his very eyes. He seemed so guileless, too, and so wholly unsuspecting of my fell design!

As we walked away, he told me of great trout which he had caught when a boy, particularly of one big three-pound trout which he had captured at a deep hole in the west brook, down near the lake.

My mind was still too much disturbed to enjoy these piscatorial reminiscences, however; and noting this, after a time, Gramp opened another subject with me.

"A man has lately made an offer for my farm and timber lands here," said he. "I do not know that I shall accept it; but I have had some thoughts of sell-

ing and moving out West. If I should, I suppose you would have to go back to Philadelphia. If I went West to look for a farm, I should call at Philadelphia on my way. You and I would make the trip there together."

It is astonishing what an effect that last remark of grandfather's produced upon me. The whole world changed from deepest, darkest blue to rose color in one minute; and I said, provisionally, to myself that even if he did not sell so that we could start for a month, I could perhaps endure it.

Observing the cheerier light in my face, probably, the old gentleman laughed good-naturedly. He had not forgotten what it is to be a boy and feel a boy's intense sorrows as well as joys; and he went on to say that a journey to Philadelphia was a mere nothing nowadays. Why, one might start, as for instance, that morning and be at Philadelphia the next morning at eleven o'clock!

But how glad I was that he did not notice that I was homesick! He did not even appear to mistrust such a thing. And as for drowning myself, well, the less said or thought about that now the better.

I walked back to the house with the Old Squire; and I got him to let me carry the axe, for I wanted Addison and Halse to think that Gramp and I had been off mending fence together.

At intervals, however, for a month or more, I continued to be afflicted by transient spasms of homesickness, but none of them were as severe as these first ones, and they gradually ceased altogether.

Dear boys and girls who are homesick, it is astonishing sometimes how quickly the spasm will pass off, and how bright and cheery life will look again a few moments later. So don't jump into deep water without waiting a bit to think it over. It is a hard old world to live in. I don't pretend to tell you that it isn't; yet life has a great many pleasant spots, after

all, if only we will have a little patience and courage to wait and look for them. Scores of poor, desperate young people have actually drowned themselves, from one cause or another, who would have scrambled out and lived happily for years afterwards, if only they had not jumped in where the water was so deep! A safe rule in all these cases is never try to commit suicide by drowning till after you have learned to swim.

CHAPTER X

MUG-BREAD, PONES AND JOHNNY-REB TOAST

TO this day I recall with what a zest my appetite returned after that last attack of homesickness, and how good the farm food tasted. That day, too, Gram had "mug-bread," and for supper pones made into Johnny-reb toast. But these, perhaps, are unheard-of dishes to many readers.

The pones were simply large, round, thin corn-meal cakes baked in a fritter-spider in a hot oven. I have lately written to Cousin Ellen, who now lives in the far Northwest, to ask her just how they used to make those pones at the old farm. She has replied lightly that for a batch of pones, they merely took a quart of yellow corn-meal, two tablespoonfuls of wheat flour, a teaspoonful of salt and half a teaspoonful of soda, all well stirred to a thin batter in boiling-hot water. This batter was then poured into large fritter-spiders, forming thin sheets, and baked yellow-brown in a hot oven. To make these pones into "Johnny-reb toast," they were basted while still hot with butter, then moistened plentifully with Jersey milk which was half cream, allowed to stand five minutes, then served still warm.

The recipe, I may add, came from Virginia in 1862, being brought home to Maine by one of my uncles, who lived for a time in an Old Dominion family, despite all the asperities of the War. From the same sunny homeland of historic Presidents we obtained the recipe for a marvellously good spider-cake, but that came later, as I shall relate in due course.

As a hungry boy I used sometimes to think that pones and "Johnny-reb toast" were pretty nearly worth the War to us!

Yet neither of these ever came quite up to "mug bread" — the best flour bread ever made, I still verily believe.

But the making and the baking of it are not easy, and a failure with mug-bread is something awful!

The reader may not know it as mug-bread, for that was a local name, confined largely to our own Maine homestead and vicinity. It has been called milk-yeast bread, patent bread, milk-emptyings bread and salt-rising bread; and it has also been stigmatized by several opprobrious and offensive epithets, bestowed, I am told, by irate housewives who lacked the skill and genius to make it.

We named it "mug-bread" because Gram always started it in an old porcelain mug; a tall, white, lavender-and-gold banded mug, that held more than a quart, but was sadly cracked, and, for safety's sake, was wound just above the handle with fine white silk cord.

That mug was sixty-eight years old, and that silk cord had been on it since 1842. Its familiar kitchen name was "Old Hannah." I suspect that the interstices of this ancient silk string were the lurking-places of that delightful yeast microbe that gave the flavor to the bread. For there was rarely a failure when that mug was used.

About once in four days, generally at night, Gram would take two tablespoonfuls of corn-meal, ten of boiled milk, and half a teaspoonful of salt, mix them well in that mug, and set it on the low mantel-shelf, behind the kitchen stove funnel, where it would keep uniformly warm overnight. She covered in the top of the mug with an old tin coffee-pot lid, which just fitted it.

When we saw "Old Hannah" go up there, we knew that some mug-bread was incubating, and, if all worked well, would be due the following afternoon for supper. For you cannot hurry mug-bread.

The next morning, by breakfast-time, a peep into the mug would show whether the little "eyes" had begun to open in the mixture or not. Here was where housewifely skill came in. Those eyes must be opened just so wide, and there must be just so many of them, or else it was not safe to proceed. It might be better to throw the setting away and start new, or else to let it stand till noon. Gram knew as soon as she had looked at it. If the omens were favorable, a cup of warm water and a variable quantity of carefully warmed flour were added, and a batter made of about the consistency for fritters. This was set up behind the funnel again, to rise till noon.

More flour was then added and the dough carefully worked and set for a third rising. About three o'clock it was put in tins and baked in an even oven.

The favorite loaves with us were "cart-wheels," formed by putting the dough in large, round, shallow tin plates, about a foot in diameter. When baked, the yellow-brown, crackery loaf was only an inch thick. The rule at Gram's table was a "cart-wheel" to a boy, with all the fresh Jersey butter and canned berries or fruit that he wanted with it.

Sometimes, however, the mug would disappear rather suddenly in the morning, and an odor as of sulphureted hydrogen would linger about, till the kitchen windows were raised and the fresh west wind admitted.

That meant that a failure had occurred; the wrong microbe had obtained possession of the mug.

In such cases Gram acted promptly and said little. She was always reticent concerning mug-bread. It had unspeakable contingencies.

Ellen and Theodora shared the old lady's reticence.

Ellen, in fact, could never be persuaded to eat it, good as it was.

"I know too much about it," she would say. "It isn't nice."

Beyond doubt, when "mug-bread" goes astray at about the second rising, the consequences are depressing.

If its little eyes fail to open and the batter takes on a greasy aspect, with a tendency to crawl and glide about, no time should be lost. Open all the windows at once and send the batter promptly to the swill-barrel. It is useless to dally with it. You will be sorry if you do. When it goes wrong, it is utterly depraved.

I remember an experience which Theodora and Ellen had with mug-bread on one occasion, when Gram was away from home. Aunt Nabbie and Uncle Pascal Mowbray came on from Philadelphia while she and the Old Squire were gone.

Aunt Nabbie was grandmother's sister, and she and Uncle Mowbray had been talking all that season of coming to visit us. But September had been spoken of as the time they were coming.

They changed their minds, however. Uncle Pascal desired to look after some business venture of his in Portland, and decided to come in August. It was a somewhat sudden change of plan, but they sent us a letter the day before they started, thinking that we would get it and meet them at the railway station.

Now, all dear city cousins, aunts, uncles and the rest of you who visit your country relatives, summer or winter, hear me! Do not hold back your letter telling them you are coming till the day before you start.

Nine times out of ten they will not get it. You will get there before the letter does; and the chances are that you will have to provide your own transportation for the six or ten miles from the railway station to

the farm, and you will think that distance longer than all the rest of the journey.

Most likely, too, you will find the farmer gone to a Grange meeting; and by the time you have sat round the farmhouse door on your trunk till he gets back at sunset, you will be homesick, and maybe hungry.

Also — for there are two sides to the matter — your country brother and his wife will be troubled about it. So send your letter at least a week ahead.

The first we knew of the coming of Uncle Pascal and Aunt Nabbie, they drove into the yard with a livery team from the village, and an express wagon coming on behind with their trunks.

Besides Uncle and Aunt, there was a smiling, dark-haired youth with them, a grand-nephew of Uncle Mowbray, named Olin Randall, whom we had heard of often as a kind of third or fourth cousin, but had never seen. He had never beheld Maine before, and was regarding everything with curiosity and a little grin of condescension.

That grin of his nearly upset us, particularly Ellen and "Doad," who for a hundred reasons wished to make a very favorable impression on Uncle and Aunt Mowbray and all the family. I nearly forgot to mention that Uncle Mowbray was reputed very fussy and particular about his food.

Our two-story farmhouse was comfortable and big, and we had plenty of everything; but of course it was not altogether like one of the finest houses in Philadelphia. For Uncle Mowbray was a wealthy man, one of those thrifty, prosperous Philadelphia merchants of the era ending with the Civil War. He never let a dollar escape him.

They came just at dusk. We boys were doing the chores. The girls were getting supper. Theodora had resolved to try her hand at a batch of "mug-bread" for the next day, and had set "Old Hannah" up for it.

The unexpected arrival upset us all a good deal, particularly Ellen and Theodora, who had to bear the brunt of grandmother's absence, get tea, see to the spare rooms and do everything else. And then there was Olin, mildly grinning. His presence disturbed the girls worse than everything else. But Aunt Nabbie smoothed away their anxieties, and helped to make all comfortable.

We got through the evening better than had at first seemed likely, and in the morning the girls rose at five and tried to hurry that " mug-bread " along, with other things, so as to have some of it for dinner, for they found that they were short of bread.

Ellen, I believe, thought that they had better not attempt the risky experiment, but should start some hop-yeast bread.

Theodora, however, peeped into the old mug, saw encouraging eyes in it, and resolved to go on. They mixed it up with the necessary warm water and flour and set it carefully back for the second rising.

Perhaps they had a little hotter fire than usual, perhaps they had hurried it a shade too much, or — well, you can " perhaps " anything you like with milk-yeast bread. At all events, it took the wrong turn and began to perfume the kitchen.

If they had not been hard pressed and a little flurried that morning, the girls would probably have thrown it out. Instead, they took it down, saw that it was rising a little and — hoping that it would yet pull through — worked in more flour and soda, and hurried four loaves of it into the oven to bake.

Then it was that the unleavened turpitude of that hostile microbe displayed the full measure of its malignity. A horrible odor presently filled the place. Stale eggs would have been Araby the Blest beside it.

The girls hastily shut the kitchen doors, but doors would not hold it in. It captured the whole house.

Aunt Nabbie, in the sitting-room, perceived it and came rustling out to give motherly advice and assistance.

And it chanced that while Theodora was confidentially explaining it to her, the kitchen door leading to the front piazza opened, and in walked Uncle Pascal, with Olin behind him. They had been out in the garden looking at the fruit, and had come back to get Aunt Nabbie to see the bees.

When that awful odor smote them they stopped short. Uncle Mowbray was a fastidious man. He sniffed and turned up his nose.

"Is it sink spouts?" he gasped. "Are the traps out of order?"

"No, no, Pascal!" said Aunt Nabbie, in a low tone, trying to quiet him. "It is only bread."

"Bread!" cried Uncle Mowbray, with a glance of rank suspicion at the two girls. "Bread smelling like that!"

Just then Ellen discovered something white, which appeared to be mysteriously increasing in size, in the shadow on the back side of the kitchen stove. After a glance she caught open the oven door.

It was that mug-bread dough! It had crawled — crawled out of the tins into the oven — crawled down under the oven door to the kitchen floor, where it made a viscous puddle, and was now trying, apparently, to crawl out of sight under the wood-box.

Aunt Nabbie burst out laughing; she could not help it. Then she tried to turn Uncle Mowbray out.

But no, he must stand there and talk about it. He was one of those men who are always peeping round the kitchen, to see if the women are doing things right. But Olin scudded out after one look, and the girls saw him under one of the Balm o' Gilead trees, shaking and laughing as if he would split.

Poor Doad and Nell! That was a dreadful forenoon for them. As youthful housekeepers they felt

themselves disgraced beyond redemption. In three years they had not recovered from it, and would cringe when any one reminded them of Uncle Mowbray and the mug-bread.

CHAPTER XI

THE BIRDS AND BIRD-SONGS AT THE OLD FARM

"Sing away, ye joyous birds,
While the sun is o'er us."

LOOKING back to that first fortnight after my arrival at the Old Squire's, I think what most impressed my youthful mind was the country verdure and the bird-songs. Everything looked so very green, accustomed as my eyes were to the red city bricks, white doorsteps and dusty streets. The universal green of those June days at times well nigh bewildered me.

Astronomers tell us that there are systems of worlds in outer space, presided over by green suns; it was as if I had been transported to such a world. Moreover, the effect was cool and calm and healthful; cities are abnormal places of abode; man originated and during all the early ages of his development, lived in the green, arboreal country, surrounded by rustic scenery and sylvan quiet. The clangor and roar of a great city, particularly the noise by night, is unnatural; nor are the reflected colors from urban structures normal to the eye. Add to these the undue tension to which city life, as a whole, braces the living substance of brain and nerve, and the reason why city populations have to be so constantly recruited from the country is in some degree explained. Children even more than older persons need country surroundings.

Next to the deep novelty of the wide green landscape, came the bird-songs. It was June. The air seemed to me all a-quiver with bird-notes, and I was

listening to each and every one. Ah, to my untried, youthful eyes those fresh great hay-fields, whitening with ox-eyed daisies, reddening with sweet-scented clover and streaked golden with vivid yellow buttercups, over which the song-convulsed bobolinks hovered on arcuate wings!

I had never heard the nesting song of a bobolink before. What a song it is! — the eager zeal, the exultation in it. The overflowing, rollicking joy with which it is poured forth, filled me with such gleeful astonishment, the first time I heard one, and struck such a chord of sympathetic feeling in my heart and so powerfully, that I recollect shouting, "ye-ho!" and racing tumultuously after the rapturous singer.

"What does that bird say?" I cried.

Laughing quietly at my fresh curiosity, the Old Squire told me that the bird was supposed to say, —

"Bob o' Lincoln, take-a-stick-and-give-a-lick, Bobolink, Kitty-link, Withy-link, Billy-seeble, see, see, see!"

Addison gave a somewhat different interpretation which has now slipped my memory; I deemed the Old Squire's version the more reliable one. While strawberrying in the fields, that summer, I searched three or four times for the nests which I felt sure were close by, in the grass, for the little plain gray wife of the noisy singer sat on the weed-tops, crying, — "Skack! skack!" but I could not find them.

Once, I remember, the following year Theodora and I resolved that we would find the nest of one bold fellow that kept singing close over our heads, as we were gathering strawberries in a grassy swale, in the west field. We set down our dishes and crept over every foot of a tract at least a quarter of an acre in extent, and went over a part of it two or three times. At last, we found it, but not till we had crushed both nest and eggs beneath our crawling knees — a denouement which distressed Theodora so much that she

declared she would never search for a bobolink's nest again. "Clumsy monsters that we are," said she; "the poor thing's nest is crushed into the dirt!"

When we came to mow that swale a few days after, Gramp first marvelled, then grumbled repeatedly; for the grass was in a mat. He spoke of it at the dinner table that day, making a covert accusation against Gram, whereupon Theodora and I owned up in the matter, Doad naïvely adding that we had done it "on the strength of Gram's original permit," but that we had agreed never to do so again. The Old Squire laughed a little grimly and said he wanted it understood, that the permit, alluded to, was not transferable. But the old lady now interposed her opinion, that the permit could be made a moderate use of by others, if she saw fit — and needed strawberries.

A pair of blue-birds built their nest in a box which Addison had nailed to a short pole and set up in the barnyard wall; and every morning, as we milked the cows, we would hear their plaintive notes, repeated over and over to each other as they flew about; — "Deary, cheer up, Deary, cheer up!" as if life needed constant mutual consolation, to be supported. "Old Ummy," the house cat, was much inclined to watch their box and once attempted to climb up to them.

Two pairs of peewees built about the premises, one just inside the south barn cellar, the other under a projecting window-sill at the end of the wagon-house. These two pairs, or younger birds reared there, had built in these same places for seven or eight years. Night and morning as we milked, and at noon also, as we sat grinding scythes at the well, those old peewees would alight on posts, or gables, rub their beaks twice on the dry wood and cry, "Peewee, peewee, peewitic; pewee, peer-a-zitic!" For some not very good reason, I took a boyish dislike to peewees. They are very useful birds, great destroyers of worms, moths and flies, and so far as I know, never do the slightest

harm, which can hardly be said of all our feathered favorites.

As we hoed potatoes and corn on those green June days, the song of the little gray ground sparrows was constantly in my ears, although the others seemed not to notice it.

"And what does that one say?" I asked Gramp.

"What one?" the old gentleman asked.

"Why, that bird! It sings all the time," I rejoined. "Don't you hear it?"

He stopped and appeared to listen, at a loss, for a minute, as to what I heard.

"Oh, those sparrows," replied he, at length. "Addison, can you tell him what they say?"

"Yes," replied Ad, laughing, "they say and say it very distinctly, too, 'Charlotte, Charlotte, don't you hear me whistle?' Charlotte is his mate, you know; and the reply to that is 'Philip, Philip's sitting on the thistle.'"

"That is a little different from what they used to tell me when I was a boy," Gramp remarked. "I was told that they say, 'War-link, war-link, christle, christle, christle; high-link, high-link, twiddle, twiddle, twiddle.'"

"Good deal anybody knows what a bird says," Halstead exclaimed, derisively. "They don't say anything that I can make out."

But it seemed to me, after Addison had mentioned it, that the first, or opening note of the song sparrow, was much like, "Charlotte, Charlotte, don't you hear me whistle?" They had several other notes, too, not as easily likened to human language; indeed, these humble little sparrows, when one comes to listen closely to them in all their moods, have a curious variety of short *arias*.

During my second week at the farm, I found a sparrow's nest in a small bunch of hard-hack, a few rods from the cow-pasture bars, with four eggs, re-

sembling, only a little larger than, speckled garden beans; and I visited it every morning, till the sprawling, skinny little chicks were hatched. But on the third morning the nest was empty; something had taken them. Addison said that it was most likely a crow, but possibly a snake. We often found the nests, while haying in the fields; the scythe generally passed over them without doing any harm, and to save them from the rake, we would put up a stick close beside them. But their enemies are wofully numerous; not half the nests of young are reared. Ants, I think, kill numbers of the nestlings, soon after they are hatched, when they chance to be near an ant-hill.

But in the early mornings and evenings, and before the quickly gathering south rains, the songsters of all others, which made the air vocal, were the great, bold, red-breasted robins, not fewer than nine pairs of which had their capacious nests in the garden, orchard and Balm o' Gilead trees. They always took the greater part of our cherries, till Addison at a considerable expense, some years later, bought mosquito netting to spread over the tree tops; and they also ate strawberries greedily; but we as constantly overlooked their offenses, they sang so royally and came familiarly back to us so early every spring. No one can long find the heart to injure Robin Red-Breast.

I do not think it necessary to qualify, or speak of this our fine bird as the "American robin, or red-breasted thrush," because a different bird is called the robin in England. This our bird is the Robin; and we shall call it so without apology, or explanatory adjectives.

The robin songs in the Balm o' Gileads, just across the yard from our chamber windows, were the matins that often waked us in June, and sounded in our drowsy ears as we lay, still half asleep, reluctant to rise and dress. For however it may be with most boys, I am obliged to confess that both then and later, I

was a sleepy-head in the morning; it always seemed to me on waking, particularly in the summer months, that I was not half rested, and that I would give almost anything I possessed for another hour of sleep. As a fact, I now feel sure that I did not get sleep enough, from half past nine in the evening to five in the morning; and I think that most boys and girls of thirteen and fourteen need nine hours of sleep in every twenty-four hours, especially where they are in active exercise or work throughout the day. It is really cruel to drive a boy up when he is so shockingly sleepy! There was always so much going on, that we could not well go to bed till after nine in the evening, although I would sometimes steal away up-stairs as soon as it was dark.

Curiously enough it was when I was but about half awake in the morning, that those robin-songs sounded the most distinctly, and I seemed to hear every note and trill which they uttered.

> "Tulip, tulip, tulip; skillit, skillit,
> Tulip, skillit; fill it, fill it, fill it;"—

followed after a moment or two, perhaps, by a shrill and noisy "Piff! piff! piff!" — as some sudden dissension broke out, or some suspicious cat, or other marauder, came near the nest tree. The crows, always bold in the early morning hours, would come into the Balm o' Gileads after birds' nests, sometimes, before we were astir. I remember that Addison once cut my nap short by firing his gun from the chamber window at a crow that was sneaking into the Balm o' Gileads after young robins. He shot the crow, but my own ear rang for more than two hours, and I was so confused for a time, that I scarcely knew enough to dress myself.

There is no combination of letters which more nearly represents the song notes of the robin than the

above, I think, although many attempts have been made to render them into some semblance of human language. Addison always insisted that they said, "Dew-lip, Dew-lip; bill it, bill it, bill it;" — the whole song being an exhortation of the robin to his mate whose name was *Dew-lip*, to get up and *bill it* for worms. Halstead had somewheres got hold of a medical rendering of the song, by a waggish doctor who declared that the robins were constantly admonishing him in the line of his profession: —

"Kill 'em, cure 'em; physic, physic."

But the rest of us scouted this partisan interpretation.

The explosive, alarmingly energetic danger cry of, "Piff, piff," which will so suddenly wake the entire vicinity of the nest, is at times modified and given quite a different intonation, as if to express discontent: "Fibb, fibb!" and sometimes even loneliness: "Pheeb, pheeb!" — very mournful.

During a shower, accompanied by wind in heavy wrenching gusts, in the night, that summer, a nest containing four young robins fell from a maple, a few rods down the lane, into the grass beneath. Theodora heard the outcry of the old robins, blended with the thunder and the roar of the rain, in the night, and noticing their mournful notes next morning about the tree, made search and discovered the calamity. Addison and she gathered up the nestlings and putting them in an old berry box, lined with grass and cotton batting, tied the improvised nest to a branch of the maple. For an hour or two the scolding old birds would not go near the thing, but later in the day we saw them, feeding their young in it, quite as if nothing had happened to disturb them.

In the rear of the wagon-house there grew a good-sized mountain ash or round-wood tree which nearly every fall was crowned with the usual great bright-red

clusters of bitter berries. Late in October the robins always came for those berries, and sometimes a flock of fifty or sixty would assemble. We often tried to frighten the birds away, for the red clusters are beautiful in winter, but for a long time we never succeeded in saving them. The robins would linger about for a week, or more, rather than leave a single bunch of those berries ungathered. Addison once placed a stuffed cat-skin in the tree, at which the robins scolded vociferously for a day or two from the neighboring shrubs and fence; but they suddenly discovered the deception and got all the remaining berries in the course of a single forenoon. Addison was boasting a little of the success of his ruse when, at dinner, Ellen quietly bade him go look at the tree. The robins had already got every berry and gone, leaving the feline effigy in the bare tree, an object of mirth and ridicule. A scarecrow made of old clothes, stuffed with hay and crowned by an old hat, set up in the tree the following year, served no better purpose. Ellen and Theodora then hung an old tin clothes boiler in the tree, and arranged a jangling bunch of tin ware inside it, with a long line running to the kitchen window, where they could conveniently give it a jerk every few minutes. This device answered well for a day or two, and it was very amusing to see those robins scatter from the tree, when the line was pulled. They were some little time making up their minds concerning it, and would sit on the back fence and rub their beaks on the posts, at intervals, as if making a great effort to comprehend the cause of the "manifestations" inside the boiler. No doubt the more superstitious ones attributed it to "spirits." Skepticism increased, however, and by the second day one unbelieving red fellow refused to budge, till the line was jerked twice, and soon after that they wore the girls out, pulling it, and got the berries as usual.

The year after, Addison saved the berries by stretching one of his cherry-tree nets over the round-wood tree, in October. It chanced, however, that the tree failed to produce a crop of berries the next season and died a year or two later; — a circumstance which Gram hinted, mysteriously, might be a "dispensation," on account of our persistent efforts to thwart the robins. It should be taken into account, however, that the mountain-ash is not long-lived, and that this was already an old tree.

In a large maple, down the lane, a preacher-bird sang every day in June and until into August, generally loudest and most continuously, from eleven till two o'clock. On coming to or going from our dinner, we would often hear him; sometimes he sang in the morning and now and then after supper. This bird — it is the red-eyed vireo — has an oddly persistent, pragmatic note, which can hardly be called singing, being more like declamation and somewhat disconnected and disjoint, as if the "preacher" were laying down certain truths and facts and seeking by constant iteration to impress them upon dullards. Betwixt every one of these short sentences, there is a little pause, as if the preacher were waiting for the truth to strike home to his hearers; but if the bird is watched, he will be seen to be picking and hopping about on the branch which serves him as a pulpit, snapping up a bug or a seed here and there. Yet his discourse goes steadily on, by the half hour, or hour, sometimes with a rising inflection, as after a question, sometimes the falling, as having given an irrefutable answer, himself. Once the idea that the bird is preaching has entered a listener's mind, he can never shake it off.

"My hearers — where are you? — You know it — you see it. — Do you hear me? — Do you believe it?" And so on, upon the same insistent and at length tiresome strain.

"Oh, I do wish that preacher bird would stop," Ellen would exclaim at times. "He has 'preached' steadily all the forenoon!"

His place for singing was always about half way from the ground to the top of the maple, and he rarely came out in sight. The female was probably sitting on her nest, hard by. They are trim little olive-tinted birds and often rear two broods, I think, for they remain north till autumn.

Once while Elder Witham was with us, in haying time, Ellen exclaimed, inadvertently, as we were going in to sit down at table one day, "There's that preacher bird again!"

The Elder looked at her a moment and said slowly, "'Preacher-bird, preacher-bird,' what kind of a bird is that, young lady?"

Greatly abashed at her lapse, Ellen hardly knew how to best explain it, but Addison came to her rescue. "There are two of those vireos," he remarked in a perfectly natural, matter-of-fact tone. "One of them, the warbling vireo, they call the 'brigadier' on account of its peculiar note, and the other or red-eyed vireo, the 'preacher,' from its earnest manner of utterance. I don't know," Addison continued, with candid frankness, "that the names are very well chosen, but we have got in the habit of calling them that way."

The Elder listened to this, observing Addison closely, then appeared thoughtful for a moment and said, impressively, "Well, all God's creatures preach, if only we have ears to hear them." Ellen drew a long breath of relief, and after dinner, out on the wood-shed walk, she took Addison by the button and said, "You're a treasure, Ad; ask me for a cooky any time after this."

The brigadier, or warbling vireo, frequently sits on the tops of trees, when singing; while the preacher takes his stand midway from the ground upwards;

the brigadier, too, more frequently joins in the great opening overture of all bird voices, at dawn, to usher in the new day, while preacher reserves his notes till the earlier choir has ceased its anthem. Withal the little preacher is much more apt to nest in trees near the habitations of men than his congener, the brigadier, who not unfrequently makes his abode at a distance from buildings, where forests border pastures, or old roads enter woody lands.

Another shrill, small songster of habits quite similar to the brigadier we used sometimes to hear, but rarely saw, on our way over to the "Aunt Hannah lot," an adjunct of the Old Squire's farm, to reach which we crossed a tract of sparse woods. Its notes, prolonged on a very sharp, high key, resembled the words, *My fee-fee-fee-fee-fee!* each louder and keener than the preceding.

Addison was quite uncertain as to this bird, during the first and second summers we were at the farm. We only saw it once or twice; for its favorite place, while singing, is at the top of some large dense tree; and we were never able to find its nest. Addison at length decided that it was an oven-bird, a surmise which he greatly desired to verify by finding the rest.

Later in life he has often laughed over our ignorance and our fruitless quests at that time.

Among the raspberry and blackberry briars, beside the stone wall on the south side of this same old road, leading to the Aunt Hannah lot, we used to see, occasionally, a deep blue indigo-bird, a very active little fellow, always flitting and hopping about amongst the briars. But we never heard it sing, nor utter any note, save rarely a petulant *snip, snip,* and never found its nest.

To the south of the same lot there was a tract of mixed wood, sapling pines, maples, a few beeches, and farther down, nearer the brook, white ash and great

yellow birches, with swamp maples, osier and alder. Here among the beeches, maples and pines, we at times heard a Theresa-bird. Theodora chanced to know something of this bird; and I remember that the first time we ever went there together, she called out to us to listen to the low, sweet note, which otherwise, in our haste, we should not have noticed. Addison had never heard it then, and his volumes of Audubon did not describe New England birds very clearly; but Theodora said this was a Theresa-bird (which we subsequently found to be the Green Warbler) and that its song was supposed, in Catholic countries, to be a petition to *St. Theresa*, viz., — "*Hear me, St. Theresa,*" beginning quite high and sinking to a much lower strain. I have since seen in the naturalist Nuttall's work, that this author compares the note of the Green Warbler to the syllables, *te-de-deritsea*, repeated slowly and melodiously.

On the north side of the lane, leading from the house down to the road, opposite the maple above alluded to, where the robins had a nest, there stood two elms, quite tall trees, in the uppermost of which, during three summers, a pair of Baltimore orioles built. These orioles had never come there previously; at least, the Old Squire had never seen one, but Gram recognized them the first time one sang, as an old acquaintance of her girlhood days; she called them Golden Robins and was much delighted to hear them. They came on one of the first days of June; and as I had arrived but a few days previously, Gram declared that I "had brought them with me." But the fact is, that the Baltimore oriole moves its habitat slowly northeastward, in the wake of man and his orchards and shade trees; for it is one of those birds which, like the robin, depend on mankind for protection. This pair constructed a hanging nest from a twig of one of the drooping elm branches and reared a brood successfully that season; and throughout that entire month

of June, their song, uttered at intervals of their labors, was a daily delight to us all. Next after the wood thrush and the robin, the loud yet sweetly modulated call of the Baltimore oriole is the most pleasing of all our bird notes. Pure and sweet as it is, too, it nearly always startles the hearer, from its regal volume and strength. Gram's version of its song was, *Cusick, cusick! So-ho-o-o! Do you know I'm back with you!* But the words themselves give no idea whatever of the song, unless uttered with the strange, liquid modulations which characterize it.

During the third season some accident befell the pair, or their nest; they suddenly disappeared and thenceforward we missed their melodious invocations. Gram, in particular, lamented their departure. A pair, perhaps the same pair, afterwards built in a butternut tree near the Edwards' farmhouse; but they never returned to us. To the lover of birds, the oriole in its flight among the trees, like a yellow meteor flashing past, is a sight that instantly rivets the attention, and is as delightfully startling to the eye as its song is to the ear. But I know of no device by means of which they can be attracted to nest in any given locality; their tastes are not well enough known to us; "houses," like those which attract the blue-bird and the martin, possess no charm for the oriole. With the first of June Gram watched, wistfully, for the return of this pair, during a number of successive springs; and for her sake especially, we all hoped they would come back.

I arrived too late the first spring, to hear the woodlands echo to the May-note of the white-throated sparrow. Once only, while going out to get the cows with little Wealthy, the second week after I came, I heard it twice repeated, from the woods along the south side of the pasture, and when I asked my small companion what kind of a bird that was, she roguishly cried, "Oh, that's old Ben Peabody."

"Is that what he says?" I asked, for the name at once struck me as being like the bird's note.

"Yes," cried Wealthy. "He says, 'Old Ben Peabody, Peabody, Peabody,' just as plain as anything. Theodora says so; and so does Nell and all of us, but Addison. Ad thinks he says, 'All day whittling, whittling, whittling.' And Alf Batchelder says, — but I'll not tell what he thinks the bird says."

"What is it?" I queried.

"It's nothing very pretty," quoth Wealthy, running off to get around the cows, thereby evading the question altogether, for she had not as yet grown very well acquainted with me.

But I have perhaps lingered too long with birds and bird-songs. It is a fond subject, however, and scarcely can I forbear to speak of the veeries, the vesper-birds, and "hair-birds" whose nests we so often found in the orchard; the cedar birds or cherry birds which so persistently stripped the wild cherry trees and pear-plum shrubs; the wood thrushes that trilled forth such sad, mellow refrains in the cool, gray border of the wood-lot below the fields, at eventide; the yellow-hammers that tapped on the pasture stumps and cried out boisterously when rain was impending; the wrens that filled and re-filled a bit of hollow aqueduct log on the lane wall, with sticks for a nest and laid thirteen eggs in it; the hundreds of black-birds that built in the reeds down at the great bog, near the head of the lake; the sap-suckers that punctured the trunks of the apple-trees with thousands of tiny holes; the many-voiced blue-jays that came around when the corn was ripening in September and sometimes lingered all winter in the neighborhood.

And of the great pileated woodpeckers, a pair of which occasionally cried loud and long from the five lofty pine stubs in the colt pasture, beyond the Aunt Hannah lot; the yellow-birds that piped, *pee-chid-aby, pee-chid-aby,* on wavy lines of flight, upon the last

days of August, just ere taking wing for warmer climes; the imitative cat-birds that built in the alders along the road across the meadow, whose nests the boys held it lawful to destroy because, forsooth, "they sucked other birds' eggs," a false accusation rendered plausible, perhaps, from their disagreeable feline squalls, and not wholly ingenuous imitations of the songs of the thrush, the veery and the robin.

How well, too, I recall the cuckoos that, night or day, intoned so moodily in the willow copses below the east field fence and suffered from a like unpopular accusation of "laying their eggs in other birds' nests." Also the mated triads of sooty chimney swallows that rumbled nightly in the great brick flues of the farmhouse, and at first almost terrified me, but at length furnished the thalamian refrain that most surely lulled me asleep; the red-headed woodpeckers that with sharp cries and concave stoop of flight moved fitfully, from tree to tree, tapping this one loudly, that one low and dull, and whose nest hole in the dead maple on the hillside was re-occupied year after year, till at last the stub blew down and broke short off at the hole itself; the king-fishers that with the same stooping flight, sprung their sharp rattles along the brooks and lakeside; the martins that feloniously caught the bees, and every season dragged their squalling, screaming young out of their pole-house, then poked them off the platform to fly for themselves, having first, however, cleared the yard of cats.

The militant king birds, too, that built every June on the tops of the small apple-trees in the young orchard, and raged in mid air, overhead, pouring out a wild farago of sharp cries, never so happy as when in full career after crows, hawks, cats or dogs; the moth-catching night-hawks that cried *peerk* from their wide mouths, high in the sky at nightfall, and dived far aslant on stiff wings, with a long drawn *soo-oo-*

ook; the clucking whip-poor-wills, that chanted from the bare flat pasture rocks; the chickadees that came into the orchard and about the great loose farm woodpile, in February, with their odd little minor refrain of *cic-a-da-da-da-da,* mere feathery mites of ceaseless activity that somehow did not freeze, at 20° below zero.

In this freezing weather, too, came the white-winged flocks of snow-buntings, that heralded the coming storm and flew away, blending with the whirling snow-flakes, uttering queer thin notes that seemed like spirit voices from the upper air: all these and many others, Nature's humble angels, what part and parcel they were of that dear old farm life of ours!

Nor yet have I mentioned the larger game birds, nor the birds of prey; the "hoot-owls" that both in summer and winter, but oftenest in March and October, on still, dark, cloudy evenings, uttered their dismal, deep bass *hoot, hoot, hoo-oo-oot,* from the depths of the gloomy forest side, beyond the Little Sea; the hen-hawks that cried down *chickee-ee* to us, from endless mazy circles high over the farm, and occasionally decimated the poultry, or were seen sailing low across the fields with a snake dangling from their claws; the eagles that seldom, but on a few occasions paid a brief visit to the vicinity; the herons that frogged along the boggy shore of the lake and built their nests in the tops of the Foy Brook pines; the wild geese that flew northward in a wide V, early in the spring and again southward in October; the sheldrake and the black ducks which Addison had such success shooting every fall, in the old mill pond, beyond the east woodlot; the swift-diving loons of the blue Pennesseewassee, that flew heavily across the hills, to several northerly ponds, uttering shaken, hollow cries, or that in the early evening and morning hours, pealed their mellow, alto horns from the calm bosom of the lake;

the partridges that "drummed" in the outlying copses and patches of second growth, in April, and led forth their broods in June, subject every autumn to our first excited, early efforts at gunning; and last of all, the flapping, canny, thievish, black crows that like the foxes were always about, and always at loggerheads with the farmers.

CHAPTER XII

TWO VERY EARLY CALLERS — EACH ON BUSINESS

EXCEPT on Sunday mornings, breakfast at the farm in summer came at six. The Old Squire himself was often astir at four; and we boys were supposed to get up at five, so as to have milking done and other barn chores off, ready to go into the field from the breakfast table. Gram and the girls also rose at five, to get breakfast, take care of the milk and look after the poultry. Everybody, in fact, rose with the birds in that rural community. But often I was scarcely more than half awake at breakfast; Ellen and Wealthy, too, were in much the same case.

On one of these early mornings when I had been there about three weeks, our drowsiness at the breakfast table was dispelled by the arrival of two early callers — each on business.

Gram was pouring the coffee, when the outer door opened and a tall, sallow, dark-complexioned woman entered, the same whom I had met on the Meadow Brook bridge, while leading Little Dagon. She wore a calico gown and sun-bonnet, and may have been fifty years of age; and she walked in quite as a matter of course, saying, "How do you do, Joseph, how do you do, Ruth?" to the Old Squire and Gram.

"Why, how do you do, Olive?" said Gram, but not in the most cordial of tones. "Will you have some breakfast with us?"

"I have been to breakfast, Ruth," replied this visitor, throwing back her sun-bonnet and thereby displaying a forehead and brow that for height and

breadth was truly Websterian. "I came to get my old dress that I left here when I cleaned house for you last spring, and I should also like that dollar that's owing me."

"Olive," rejoined Gram severely, "I do not owe you a dollar."

"Ruth," replied the caller with equal severity, "you do owe me a dollar."

She proceeded, as one quite familiar in the house, to the kitchen closet and took therefrom an old soiled gingham gown.

"Olive," said the Old Squire, "are you quite sure that there is a dollar due you here?"

"Joseph," replied the lofty-browed woman, "do you think I would say so, if I did not know it?"

"No, Olive, I don't think you would," said the Old Squire.

"It's no such thing, Olive," cried Gram, looking somewhat heated. "I always paid you up when you cleaned house for me and when you spun for me."

"Always but that one time, Ruth. Then you did not — into a dollar," replied the sallow woman, positively.

An argument ensued. It appeared that the debated dollar was a matter of three or four years standing. There was little doubt that both were equally honest in their convictions concerning it, pro and con. Still, they were a dollar apart, somehow. Furthermore, it came out, that "Olive" when she felt periodically poor, or out of sorts, was in the habit of calling and dunning Gram for that dollar, much to the old lady's displeasure.

The Old Squire sat uneasily and listened to the talk, with growing disfavor. At last he pulled out his pocketbook. "I will pay you the dollar, Olive," he said, "if only to stop the dispute about it."

"You sha'n't do it, Joseph!" exclaimed Gram. "There's no dollar due her."

But the Old Squire persisted in handing the woman a dollar.

"I do not care whether it is due or not!" he exclaimed. "I have heard altogether too much of this."

"I thank you, Joseph, for doing me justice of my hard-handed employer," said the tall woman, austerely.

"Now did ever anybody hear the like!" Gram exclaimed, pink from vexation. "Oh, Olive, you — you — you bold thing, to say that of me!"

"There, there!" cried the Old Squire. "Peace, women folks. Remember that you are both Christians and public professors."

Gram sat and fanned herself, fast and hard. Our visitor folded the dress into a bundle and marched slowly and austerely out.

"Olive, I hope your conscience is clear," Gram called after her severely.

"Ruth, I hope your conscience is as clear as mine," the departing one called back in calm tones, from the yard outside.

She left an awkward silence behind her; breakfast had come to a standstill; and I improved the elemental sort of hush, to whisper to Theodora, who had been at the farm a year, and ask who this portentous disturber of the family credit really was.

"Oh, it is only 'Aunt Olive,'" Theodora whispered back. "She comes here to help us every spring and fall."

"Is she our actual aunt?" I asked in some dismay.

"No, she isn't our real, kindred aunt," said Theodora, "but folks call her Aunt Olive. She is a sister to Elder Witham; and they say she can quote more Scripture than the Elder himself.

"And I'm sort of glad that Gramp gave her the dollar," Theodora added, in a still lower whisper. "Maybe Gram did forget to pay her, once."

But Gram was both incensed and humiliated. She

resumed the interrupted coffee pouring and handed the Old Squire his cup, with a look of deep reproach.

Partly to change the unpleasant subject, perhaps, he said to us briskly, "Boys, if we have good luck and get our haying work along, so we can, we will all make a trip over to Norridgewock and see Father Rasle's monument.

"Ruth, wouldn't you like to take a good long drive over to Norridgewock, after the grain is in?" he asked in pacificatory tones.

"Joseph!" replied Gram, "you make me smile! You have been talking of driving over to Norridgewock to visit Father Rasle's monument, and of going to Lovewell's Pond, ever since I first knew you! But you never have been, and I haven't a thought that you ever will go!"

"Well, but something has always come up to prevent it, Ruth," Gramp replied hastily.

"Yes, Joseph, and something will come up to prevent it this year, too."

It was at this point that the second early caller had his arrival announced. Little Wealthy, who had stolen out to watch Aunt Olive's departure and then gone to the barn to see to her own small brood of chicks, came running in headlong and cried, "Oh, Gram! Gram! a great big fox has got one of your geese — on his back — and is running away!"

"What!" exclaimed Gram, setting the heavy coffee-pot down again with a roiling bump. "Oh, Lord, what a morning. Where, child, where?"

"Out beyond the west barn!" cried Wealthy; but by this time Addison, Halse and I were out of doors, in pursuit.

Beyond the west barn, there was a little hollow, or swale, where a spring issued; and a few rods below the spring, a dam had been constructed across the swale to form a goose-pond for Gram's flock. It was a muddy, ill-smelling place; but hither the geese

would always waddle forth of a summer morning, and spend most of the day, wading and swimming, with occasional loud outcries.

As we turned the corner of the barn, we met the flock — minus one — beating a retreat to the goose-shed. But the fox was not in sight.

"Which way did he go, Wealth?" cried Addison, for Wealthy had run after us, full of her important news.

"Right across the west field," she exclaimed. "He had the old goose on his back, and it was trying to squall, but couldn't."

"Get the gun, Halse!" exclaimed Addison. "No, it isn't loaded! Bother! But come on. The fox cannot run far with one of those heavy geese, without resting. He is probably behind the pasture wall."

We set off at speed across the field and heard Gram calling out to us, "Chase him, boys! Chase the old thief. You may make him drop it."

Away through the grass, laden with dew and "hopper spits," we careered, and came on the trail of the fox where he had brushed off the dew as he ran. But the rogue was not behind the pasture wall.

"Keep on," cried Addison, "he cannot run fast." We crossed the pasture and entered the sugar maple grove between the pasture and the Aunt Hannah Lot. As it chanced, the fox was lurking in the high brakes here, having stopped to rest, no doubt, as Addison had conjectured. We did not come upon him here, however; for warned probably by the noise which we made, the goose-hunter stole out silently on the farther side and ran on across the open fields of the Aunt Hannah Lot. As we emerged from the belt of woodland, we caught sight of him, toiling up a hillside beyond the fields, fifty or sixty rods away.

"It is of no use to chase him any further," said Addison, pulling up. "He will reach the woods in a few minutes more."

By this time we were all three badly out of breath. The fox had the best of the race. We could distinguish plainly the white goose across his back, in contrast to his butter-colored coat and great bushy tail.

"Wouldn't Gram fume to see that!" Halse exclaimed. "Her best old goose is taking its last ride."

"I think I know where that fox is going," remarked Addison. "I was in those woods, gunning, one day last fall, and I came to a fox burrow, in the side of a knoll, among trees. There was no end of yellow dirt, dug out, and there seemed to be two or three holes, leading back into the side-hill. I told the Old Squire about it. He said it was a fox-hole, and that there had been one there for years. When he was a young man, he once saw six foxes playing around that knoll, and, first and last, he trapped a number there."

We went back to our interrupted breakfast. Gram heard our tidings with much vexation. Gramp laughed. "If the foxes got every goose, I shouldn't cry," said he. "Nasty creatures! Worse than a parcel of pigs about the farm."

"But you like to put your head on a soft pillow as well as any one," replied Gram calmly. "If you know of anything that makes better pillows than *live* geese feathers, I shall be glad to hear about it."

The Old Squire not having any proper substitute to offer, Gram went on to say that she wished some of us possessed the energy (I believe she said *spunk*) to make an end of that fox; for now that it had achieved the capture of a goose from her flock, it would be quite likely to come back for another, in the course of a day or two.

This appeal stirred our pride, and after we had gone out to hoe corn that forenoon, Addison asked the Old Squire whether he thought it likely we could unearth the fox, if, as we suspected, it had its haunt in the burrow on the hillside of the Aunt Hannah Lot.

"Maybe," replied the Old Squire, "by digging hard enough and long enough. But 'tis no easy job."

Addison did not say anything more for ten or fifteen minutes, when he observed that as Gram seemed a good deal disturbed, he for one would not mind an hour or two of digging, if it would save her geese.

"Oh, I have nothing against her geese, boys," replied the old gentleman with a kind of apologetic laugh. "I like to hear her stand up for them once in a while.

"I wanted to get this corn hoed by to-morrow," he continued. "Let's see, to-morrow is Saturday. We will take the crowbar and some shovels and make a little trip over to that burrow, later this afternoon. Don't say anything about it at dinner; for likely as not we shall not find the fox there."

After we had hoed for some time longer, Addison said, "What if we have Halse run over to Edwardses', right after dinner, and ask Tom to take a bar, or shovel, and go with us. Tom is a good hand at digging, — and that fox may trouble them, too."

The Old Squire laughed. "You are a pretty crafty boy, Addison," said he.

Ad looked a little confused. "I knew Tom would like to go first rate," said he; "and as there may be considerable hard digging before us, I thought it would be all right to have somebody who could take his turn at it."

"Quite right," replied Gramp, still laughing. "Craft is a good thing and often helps along famously. But don't grow too crafty.

"I am quite willing for you to send for Thomas," he added. "I think it is a good idea."

Accordingly, at noon Halse went to the Edwards homestead, bearing an invitation to a fox-digging bee. They, too, were busy with their hoeing, but Mr. Edwards, who was a very good-humored man, gave Thomas permission to join us at two o'clock.

When we went out from dinner to our own hoeing, we took along an axe, two spades, a hog-hook to pull out the fox, and a crowbar, also the gun; and after working two hours in the corn-field, we set off across the fields and pastures for the fox burrow, just as Thomas came running across lots to join us.

"Mother's glad to have me go," said he. "She lost a turkey last week; and father says there's a fox over in that burrow, this summer, no mistake. Father gets up at half-past three every morning now, and he says he has heard a fox bark over that way at about sunrise for a fortnight. But we will end his fun for him."

Thomas was such a resolute boy that it was always a treat to hear him talk.

Crossing the pasture, we climbed the hillside of the Aunt Hannah lot, and again entering the maple woods, went on for forty or fifty rods over rather rough ground.

"That's the knoll," said Addison, pointing to a hillock among the trees.

"Yes, that's the place," the Old Squire corroborated.

On the side of the knoll next us as we drew near, there was a large hole, leading downwards and backwards into the bank side. A quantity of yellow earth had been thrown out quite recently, looking as if dogs had tried to dig out the fox. Tom looked into the hole.

"Yes, siree," he exclaimed. "There's a fox lives here; I know by these flies in the mouth of the hole. You'll always see two or three of these flies at a hole where there's a fox or a wood-chuck."

Farther around the knoll there were two other holes, one beside a rock and the other under a birch-tree root, which manifestly led into the same burrow, deep back in the knoll.

"And only look here!" cried Addison. "See these bones and these feathers."

"Oho!" said the Old Squire. "'Tis a female fox with her cubs that has taken up her abode in the old burrow this summer. That accounts for her raids on the turkeys and geese; she's got a young family to look out for."

After some discussion, it was agreed to begin our assault at the hole where the bones and feathers had been brought out; and while Addison and I went to block up the entrance to the other two holes with stones, the Old Squire threw off his coat, and seizing the crowbar, commenced to break down the rooty ground over the hole, while Thomas and Halse cleared it away with their shovels. We worked by turns, or all together, as opportunity offered. It was no light task for a warm June afternoon, and we were soon perspiring freely. Gradually we removed the top of the knoll, following the hole inward, and came to the intersection of this one with another farther around to the west side. There was a considerable cavity here, matted underfoot with feathers and small bones. From this point the burrow crooked around a large rock down in the ground.

Listening now at this opening, we could hear faint sounds farther back in the earth, and an occasional slight sneeze.

"Digging to get away, or get out!" exclaimed Thomas.

While we were resting and listening, a sharp, querulous bark came suddenly to our ears from out in the woods behind us.

"'Tis the old fox!" said Addison. "She's been away. She isn't in the hole. But she has come back in sight, and she don't like the looks of us here." He seized the gun and went cautiously off in the direction of the sound, but could not again catch sight of the fox.

We resumed our digging, and soon broke into a still larger cavity, leading off from which were three passages. Fresh earth was flying back out of one of them.

"We are close hauls on the fox inside!" cried Thomas. "Stand ready with the gun, Ad; he may make a bolt out by us."

The Old Squire plied the crowbar again, and breaking down a part of the bank over the passage, we caught sight of three fox cubs, all making the dirt fly, digging away for dear life, to get farther back. As the bank broke down and the light fell in upon them, they turned for a moment from their labors, and casting a foxy eye up at us, "yapped" sharply and bristled themselves.

"Oh, the little rogues!" cried Addison. "Only look at them! Look at their little paws and their little noses all covered with yellow dirt! There they go at it again, digging!"

"Aren't they cunning!" exclaimed Thomas. "Fox all over, too. Regular little rascals. See the white of those eyes, will you, when they turn them up at us! Isn't that a rogue's eye now?"

"We will catch them and carry them home, and put them in a pen," said Addison. "By next November their skins will be worth something."

"They will make you lots of work, to tend them and get meat for them," said the Old Squire. "Their pelts will not half pay you for your trouble."

These cubs were several weeks old, I suppose, but they were not larger than half-grown kittens.

"It won't answer for you to grab them with your bare hands," the Old Squire warned us. "I did that once, when a boy, and found that a fox cub is sharp-bitten."

They were of rather lighter yellow tint than a full-grown fox, but otherwise much like, although their legs, we thought, were not yet as long in proportion

as they would become; nor yet were their tails in full bush.

It was not quite as far across lots to the Edwards farm as it was to the Old Squire's, and at length Addison and Thomas set off to go there for a basket to put the foxes in, and some old thick gloves with which to catch them.

Meantime the rest of us remained hard by, to watch the burrow, lest the cubs should escape. Once, while the boys were gone, we heard the mother fox bark. Halse went after her with the gun; she was evidently lingering about, but he could not catch sight of her.

The boys returned with a bushel basket and an old potato sack, to tie over the top of it. A little more of the bank was then broken down, when Addison, reaching in with his hands, protected by a pair of buckskin gloves, seized first one, then another, of the snapping, snarling little vulpines and popped them into the basket. It was agreed that Thomas should have one of them; and in furtherance of this division of the spoils, Halse and Addison went around by way of the Edwards farm, with Tom and the basket, while the Old Squire and I loaded ourselves with the tools and took the direct route homeward.

Supper was ready and Theodora had been blowing the horn for us, long and loud; in fact, we met her by the corn-field, whither she had at length come in search of us. I hastily told her of the capture, but the Old Squire said, "Don't tell your grandmother till the boys come with the cubs, then we will show them to her."

So we went into the house and leisurely got ready for supper. At length, Addison and Halse came to the kitchen door with their basket; and Gramp said, "Come here, Ruth, and see two little fellows who helped eat your old goose."

Gram came out looking pretty stern at the word goose, and when Ad pulled the bag partly away and

showed the two fox cubs, casting up the whites of their roguish eyes at her, she exclaimed harshly, "Ah, you little scamps!"

"But, oh, aren't they cunning! Aren't they pretty!" exclaimed Theodora and Ellen.

"Well, they are sort of pretty," admitted Gram, softening a little as she looked at them. "I suppose they are not to blame for their sinful natures, more than the rest of us."

We then told her of our exploit, digging them out of the burrow. The Old Squire thought that the mother fox would not trouble the farm-yard further, now that her family was disposed of.

After supper, Addison gathered up boards about the premises and built a pen out behind the west barn, in which to inclose the young foxes. As nearly as I can now remember, the pen was about fifteen feet long by perhaps six feet in width, with board sides four feet high. We also covered the top of it with boards upon which we laid stones. A pan for water was set inside the pen, and we gave them, for food, the various odds and ends of meat and other waste from the kitchen. For a day or two we enjoyed watching them very much.

They did not thrive well, but grew poor and mangy; and I may as well go on to relate what became of them. After we had kept them in the pen about a month, a dog, or else a fox, came around one night and dug under the side of the pen, as if making an attempt to get in and attack them. The outsider, apparently, was not successful in breaking in, and probably went away after a time, but it had dug a sufficiently large hole for the two young foxes to escape; they were discovered to be missing in the morning. Addison thought that it might possibly have been the mother fox.

One of these cubs — as we believed — came back to the pen under singular circumstances eight or

nine months later. Having no use either for the old boards, or for the ground on which the pen stood, it was not taken away, but remained there throughout the autumn and following winter.

One day in April we heard two hounds baying, and as it proved, they were out hunting on their own account and had started a fox. We heard them from noon till near four in the afternoon, when Ellen, who was in the kitchen at one of the back windows, saw them, and, at a distance of twenty rods or less in advance of them, a small fox, coming at speed across the field, heading toward the west barn.

Addison and I were working up fire-wood in the yard at the time, and Ellen ran out to tell us what she had seen. We now heard the hounds close behind the barn, and getting the gun, ran out there. The fox, hard pressed evidently, had run straight to that old pen and taken refuge in it, through a hole in the top where the covering boards were off. But before we reached the spot, one of the hounds had also got in and shaken the life out of the refugee.

We could not positively identify the fox, yet it was a young fox, and we all thought that it resembled one of the cubs which we had kept in the pen. I am inclined to think that, finding itself in sore straits, it came to the old pen where, though a captive, it had once been safe from dogs which came about the place.

CHAPTER XIII

WE ALL SET OFF TO HAVE OUR PICTURES TAKEN

A FEW days later — I think it was June 15th — Gram's constant, urgent reminders prevailed, and directly after the noontide meal we all set off for the village, to have our pictures taken. The old lady had never ceased to mourn the fact that there were two of her sons whose photographs had not been taken before they enlisted. This was not so unusual an omission in those days as it would be at present; having one's photograph taken was then a much less common occurrence. Indeed, the photograph proper had hardly begun to be made, at least, not in the rural districts. The ambrotype was still the popular variety of portrait.

Personally, I confess to a lingering liking for the old ambrotype, the likeness taken on a glazed plate, on which the lights are represented in silver, and the shades are produced by a dark background. I like, too, the respectful privacy of the little inclosing case which you opened to gaze on the face of your friend. Best of all, I like its great durability and fadelessness. The name itself is a passport to favor in a picture, from *ambrotos,* immortal, and *tupos,* type, or impression: the immortal-type. Your pasteboard photograph so soon grows yellowed, dog-eared and stale! For certain purposes I would be glad to see the dear old ambrotype revived and coming back in fashion. True, you had to squint at it at a certain angle to see what it was; but when you obtained the right view, it was wonderfully lifelike and comforting.

One obstacle and another had delayed the trip for several weeks, but on that sunny June day the word to go was given. With much care and attention to clean faces, and hair, our best clothes were donned, for to have one's picture taken was then one of the great occasions of a youngster's life. There was earnest advice given on all sides in regard to "smiling expressions." Little Wealthy, especially, was exhorted so much in this respect, that she actually shed tears before we started. A "smiling expression" sometimes comes hard. Nor was she alone in her anxiety. I remember being a good deal worried about it, and that I had secretly resolved — since the sitting was said to occupy less than a minute — to draw a long breath, set my teeth together hard, and hold on to my "smiling expression" for that one minute, at least, if I died for it afterwards.

Indeed, the young folks of this later generation will hardly be able to understand what an ordeal it was to sit for an ambrotype, in 1866.

Ambrotypes were the kind of pictures which Gram had in view. Moreover, she had no notion of investing in more than one likeness apiece for each of us. This ambrotype was to be kept in the family archives, for the benefit of generations to come; the idea of having a dozen taken, or even half a dozen, to give away to one's friends, had not at that time entered the minds of country people in that portion of New England.

We had at first intended to start by nine in the morning and arrive by ten or eleven, so as to have the benefit of the midday sun — an important requisite for an ambrotype. But it was eleven o'clock before all were properly ready, and Gram then decided to have our noon meal before setting off. We got off a few minutes past noon. All the doors of the farmhouse were locked, or otherwise fastened, the garden gate closed and the horses harnessed. The Old Squire

with Gram led the way in the single wagon, and we six cousins, with Addison driving old " Sol," followed in the express wagon, three on a seat. We were conscious that we presented a curiously holiday appearance and laughed a great deal as we rattled along the road, although secretly each felt not a little anxious.

" Oh, but it's nothing!" Halstead exclaimed over and over. " All you have to do is to sit still a minute; the cammirror is the thing that does the work;" — for he was a little shaky on the pronunciation of the word camera, or the workings of it. To Addison and Theodora's great amusement, he went on to inform the rest of us in a superior tone, that the cammirror took a reflection from a person's face, much as a looking-glass does, and then threw it on a " mess of soft chemical stuff " which the artist had spread on a little pane of glass. " Being soft, the reflection naturally sticks in it," Halse continued. " Then all the fellow has to do is to harden it up — and there you are.

" But he has to be pretty careful, or you come out upside down," Halstead added. " I had a notion of buying one of those cammirrors once, before I came here, and starting in the business. I wish I had now. It is a sight better business than farming. I knew a fellow out at New Orleans that made thirteen dollars in one day, taking pictures."

" I wonder that you didn't get a ' cammirror,' Halse," Addison remarked. " You might have become a rich man in a few years."

" Oh, but it's dreadful unhealthy work," replied Halstead, in an offhand tone. " The chemical stuff they have to mix up gets into the lungs. It smells terribly. There's two kinds. The worst-smelling kind isn't the most unhealthy, though; the other kind you can but just smell at all, but one good whiff of it will about use a man up, if it gets fairly into his lungs. It doesn't answer for the artist fellow to breathe much

when he is in the little dark place, where he spreads the chemical stuff on the glass. They generally hold their noses when they are in there."

"If that is true, we had all better be careful how we breathe much this afternoon," Addison observed, feigning a very anxious glance around.

Little Wealthy looked distressed, however, and erelong intimated a desire to ride with Gram in the other wagon. She and Theodora and I rode on the back seat of our wagon; and I heard Theodora whispering to her reassuringly, that Halstead's talk was all nonsense.

On reaching the village we hitched our horses under two of the Congregationalist meeting-house sheds, and then proceeded to the small, low studio, or "saloon," with a large window in the roof, where at that time one Antony Lockett (or else Locke) practised the art of photography. He was a tall, large man of sandy complexion, somewhat slow in his movements and of pleasant manners. Gram opened negotiations with him directly, as to the price of ambrotypes, etc. She was not a little distressed, however, to learn from Mr. Lockett that ambrotypes were somewhat out of fashion, and that a new-fangled thing, called a photograph, represented the highest art and progress of the day. It was expensive, however. Of ambrotypes the artist spoke somewhat apologetically and slightingly. He also talked fluently of "tin-types," a kind of small, inferior likeness on a thin metal plate, without case, or glass. These he offered to make by the dozen at prices which almost shocked us from their cheapness.

As an artist who wished to exercise his vocation to the extent of its possibilities, Mr. Lockett argued adroitly in favor of the new photographs for all of us.

Grandmother was much perplexed. "It appears that times are changing," I heard her say to the Old Squire.

"I should say times were changing, Ruth!" he replied rather shortly. "If this man is going to charge six dollars apiece for us all, for photographs, I guess we had better get our horses and go home."

"Of course we cannot pay any such money as that, Joseph," Gram concurred. "We shall have to have ambrotypes, as we set out in the first place. I cannot see any better way. But it's a pity fashion has turned against them."

Ambrotypes being declared for, artist Lockett made his preparations, including several trips into his little dark room, the erection of his camera on its tripod, hanging a little pink sock on a hook upon the wall to look at, and setting out a chair with an iron head-rest. He then said, somewhat impressively, "I am ready. Who will sit first?"

None of us wished for that distinction, and to this day I recall the terrified look in little Wealthy's eye as she sought to make herself invisible behind Theodora's shoulder. The child was really much alarmed, largely from the peculiar odor which pervaded the place, and the stories which Halstead had told on our way down. It was the odor of all ambrotype "saloons" of that date, which can best be described by saying that it resembled what might have been, if the place had long been the haunt of a horde of cats.

"Joseph," said Gram at length, "you had better sit first, you are the oldest."

"I am not so very many months older than you, Ruth," replied the Old Squire, with a twinkle of his eye. "And when I was a young man, it was held to be the proper thing to seat the ladies first."

"Now don't you go to being funny, Joe," replied Gram, fanning herself vigorously. "This is no place for it."

Thus rebuked, and after some hesitation, the old gentleman with a queer expression took his seat in the "chair," and had his iron-gray head adjusted to the

round black disks of the head-rest. Gram arranged his front lock with her comb, and said, "Now keep your eye on the little sock, Joseph, and look smilin';" — a superfluous piece of advice, as it proved, for he had already begun grinning awfully.

The artist, who had his head under the black cloth of his camera, now suddenly looked forth and gave different advice. "Not too smilin'. Not so smilin' as that, quite," said he.

But the Old Squire only grinned the more vigorously, showing several teeth.

Gram went around in front by the artist. "Oh, no, Joseph, not near so smilin'!" she exclaimed.

But do their best, they could not get the smile off his face.

"Look more solemn, Joseph," Gram now exhorted him. "You are overdoing it."

But so certain as the artist raised his hand to take off the cap from the camera, the Old Squire's face would begin to pucker again, and the artist was obliged to wait.

We all grew scandalized at his unaccountable levity. Addison sat laughing silently in a chair behind, and Gram at last lost her patience.

"If you were only a little boy, it wouldn't be quite so silly!" she exclaimed. "But an old man, with only a few years more on the earth, to behave so, is all out of character. Think of the shortness of life, Joseph, and the certainty of death."

But still from some nervous perversity, the old gentleman's face drew up in the same inveterate pucker whenever Lockett raised his hand to uncap the camera.

"O Joe, I'm astonished at you! I am for certain!" cried Gram, so vexed and angry that she lost all patience. She rushed to the door and looked out, to control her feelings.

Theodora then drew near the Old Squire's side and whispered, "Think of the War, Grandpa."

The War was then a topic of such terrible sadness for us that the mention of it, ordinarily, was sufficient to unloose the most poignant recollections. To grandfather, as to us all, it had brought a sable cloud of bereavement. But even thoughts of the War did not now long suffice to remove that grin — longer than till the Old Squire saw Lockett's hand raised. Then out jumped the all too "smilin' expression" again.

Gram went out of doors altogether and walked along the sidewalk, in mortification and despite; her feelings were much outraged.

Lockett now essayed to turn the conversation upon a current political topic, namely the nomination of General Grant for the Presidency; and it seemed as if the grin was at last exorcised. Yet when the artist attempted covertly to remove the cap, a hundred puckers gathered about Gramp's eyes again, his chin twitched, and even there were wrinkles on his nose.

With that, Lockett himself walked to the door for a time. Gram now returned, her face very red, and stalking in, surveyed the offender with a look of hard exasperation. "My senses, Joseph, you are the most provoking man I ever set my two eyes on. I do declare you are!"

Lockett returned to his place by the camera, looking somewhat bored. "Well, shall we try again?" said he.

"If he don't keep his face straight now, I'll know the reason!" Gram chimed in.

Yet quite the same when Lockett lifted his hand, after an awful pause, every furrow and pucker reappeared.

"Oh, there!" Gram exclaimed almost in tears, so vexed she had grown. "Take him. Take him, just as he is, the old Chessy-cat!" and again she rushed away to the door and snatched out her pocket handkerchief.

Then Addison, who had sat and laughed till he

had laughed himself tired and sober, came to the rescue, with a stroke of genius. Nodding covertly to Lockett, he approached the Old Squire from behind, and in a tone, as intended only for his private ear, murmured, "Say, Gramp, d'ye know this Lockett charges six dollars an hour for his time!"

The old gentleman's face suddenly straightened as his ear caught the words, and a look of dignified indignation and incredulity overspread his countenance, observing which the artist removed the cap and the likeness was taken. What the thoughts of death and War failed to accomplish was done by sudden resentment. After a moment or two, Gramp perceived the ruse which Addison had practised on him, and laughed as he rose from the chair. But Gram would not so much as look at him, and she scarcely spoke to him again that day.

The Old Squire did not at the time condescend to offer any explanation of his "smilin' expression;" but years afterwards, on an occasion when he and I were making a journey together, he told me that he never quite understood, himself, what whimsical freak took possession of his mind that day. To have saved his life — he said — he could not have kept a sober face when Lockett raised his hand to the cap. The ambrotype faithfully reproduced the sudden resentful expression on his countenance; and we always spoke of it as the "six dollars an hour expression."

Grandmother sat next, after Theodora and Ellen had arranged or rather rearranged her somewhat ruffled hair and collar. There was no troublesome smile on her countenance that afternoon! The flush of excitement and anger still tinged her cheeks, and her eye looked a little snappy. Theodora tried to modify the severe expression by saying pleasant things while helping seat her in a good position, but only half succeeded; and the picture which we have of her does not do her entire justice, since it gives an impression

of austerity not in keeping with her usual disposition and character.

I think that Addison sat next, and after him Halstead, who assumed a somewhat bumptious air, which was to an extent reflected in his picture.

Theodora had the "smiling expression" naturally, and perhaps added a trifle to it for the occasion. We often said to her afterwards, when looking at the pictures, that her smile was almost as broad as Gramp's irrepressible one. Still, it was a very good likeness of her at fifteen and of the genial, half-amused expression she often wore during those happy years at the farm.

It now came my turn to sit in the chair and have my head put back against the rest. For some reason Addison laughed, and then the others came around in front of me and laughed, too. "Don't he look worried?" cried Halstead. "Get on your 'smiling expression.' Don't stare at that poor little sock so hard, you'll knock it down off the hook! The little sock isn't to blame."

"Smile a little," said the artist gently.

But I had just witnessed what befell Gramp from smiling, and was afraid to risk it. "Oh, now!" whispered Theodora, "you really mustn't look so morose. Think of something pleasant. Think of catching trout."

But it would not come to me. "He can't smile," said Addison. "I'll stump him to smile."

"Oh, but you do look sad!" exclaimed Ellen.

"A regular cast-iron glare," said Halstead.

I grew angry.

"There's going to be a thunder-shower from the looks of his face," Addison remarked. "I'm going to get under cover."

They all took the hint and went away from in front of me. It seemed to me that those iron disks of the head-rest were the only two points on which my entire

weight rested. The little pink sock swam up and down; and from somewheres in the rear I heard Halse saying, " He will have a fit in a minute more! "

At that moment Lockett took off the cap. I caught my breath, tried hard to smile just a little and no more, and clenched my fists. *Click!* the cap was replaced, and Lockett said, " That'll do." I got out of the chair and walked to the door; my ears were singing and both feet had " gone to sleep." The ambrotype subsequently gave evidence that my last effort to smile had materialized to the extent of being faintly visible, like a far-distant nebula on a clear night. The others always hectored me about that " frozen smile."

Ellen sat next and was taken very quickly, while I stood at the door recovering myself; but Wealthy suffered even more than I did, I feel sure. The poor child had stood awestruck and alarmed all the time the others were sitting. What she had seen had by no means tended to reassure her. She actually turned pale when Theodora took her to the chair; her dark eyes looked uncommonly large and wild. The smile which they finally developed on her face was one of fascination rather than pleasure; and when at length the cap was replaced and the artist said, " That'll do," she bounced out of the chair as if made of India-rubber.

We did not get the ambrotypes, in their small, square, black cases, till some weeks subsequently; and I recollect that the entire bill was twelve dollars, also that we all — all except Gram — rode home from the village in very high spirits, as those do who have successfully passed through a perilous ordeal. Gram, indeed, was unable to recover her equanimity till next day.

CHAPTER XIV

"THERE IS A MAN IN ENGLAND, NAMED DARWIN"

IT was the following Sunday morning, if I remember aright, that I first heard the name of Charles Darwin and received an intimation as to the now world-famous theory of the origin and descent of mankind. What a singular name Darwin seemed to me, too, the first time I heard it.

The Old Squire was a great reader, for a Maine farmer, who as a rule has little time for that, during the summer season. But he always caught a few minutes for his newspapers at breakfast, or dinner, although we did not then take a daily paper.

The old gentleman had not received a college education, but he had once attended Fryeburg Academy, at the time Daniel Webster taught there, and afterwards had been a student for two terms at Hebron Academy. Even at the age of sixty-nine he retained a somewhat remarkable thirst for information of all kinds. I remember that he would sit for a whole evening, poring so intently in a volume of Chamber's *Encyclopædia* as to be hardly aware of what was going on in the room about him. After a manner, too, he kept pretty well posted, not only on events of current history and politics, but of scientific progress.

That spring of 1866, he had privately sent to an acquaintance in Portland to procure for him a copy of *The Origin of Species*, then a new book, to which he had seen brief allusions in our weekly newspapers, and concerning which he felt much curiosity. He read it all through, carefully, without saying much,

if anything, about it to Gram, or any one else. But Elder Witham found out, somehow, that there was such a book in our house, and his animosity against it was much excited.

Before prayers that Sunday morning the Old Squire looked around — though I think he had Addison and Theodora chiefly in mind — and said, "There is a man in England, named Darwin, Charles Darwin, who has written a book, called *The Origin of Species*, of which a great deal begins to be said. This Darwin is a scholarly man and writes modestly. I see that a great many appear to be adopting his views. He holds that man has risen from certain lower animals, somewhat like the monkeys, or apes, and therefore that we are related by descent to these animals, instead of having been created perfect, as the Bible seems to teach.

"This man Darwin brings forward a great many things in support of his views, some of which seem reasonable. He appears to be a sincere man, and as such ought not to be condemned hastily. I think it is still too soon to form a decided opinion as to this, and that it is safer for us to go on believing as the Scriptures teach.

"I mention this," the Old Squire continued, "Because Elder Witham tells me that he is going to take up Darwin's book in his sermon a week from to-day, to warn people against it. The Elder, who is also very sincere, believes that this Darwin is a dangerous man who is doing vast harm to Christianity. I do not go quite so far as that, myself, although I still hold to the Scriptural account of man's creation. But if Mr. Darwin is as honest a man as he seems and has published what he thinks to be the truth, I do not believe his book will in the end do any harm in the world. But it is always better, in such important matters, not to change our opinions hastily, but to reflect carefully."

After a pause Addison spoke. "Elder Witham's sermon against Darwin will not change my mind," said he, very decidedly. "I think Darwin is right. He is a great man. Elder Witham is always down on everything that touches his narrow views of the Bible."

"The Elder is an honest, fearless man," was all the reply the Old Squire made to that. But Gram exclaimed that she hoped none of us would ever read that wicked book about mankind being from monkeys — which somehow made me perversely resolve to read it.

The Old Squire, however, kept *The Origin of Species* put away in some secret receptacle known only to himself.

That same Sabbath morning, too, the Old Squire read briefly from one of the papers of a terrible war that was raging in South America, between Paraguay on one hand and Brazil and the Argentine Republic on the other. As usual, after reading anything of this kind at table, the old gentleman commented on it and generally made some point clear to us.

"The trouble down there in South America," said he, "comes wholly from an unscrupulous man, named Francisco Lopez, who has contrived to make himself Dictator of Paraguay. Lopez is an imitator of Napoleon Bonaparte. He has an insatiate ambition to conquer all South America and found an empire there, much as Napoleon sought to conquer Europe and establish a great French empire. Napoleon is Lopez' model. He has plunged Paraguay in misery and mourning.

"When I was a boy," the Old Squire added, "I had a great admiration for Napoleon Bonaparte and loved to read of his great battles. Nearly all young people do admire him. But now that I see his motives and his acts more clearly, I regard him as a monster of egotism and brutal ambition."

Halstead had stolen out while the Old Squire was reading to us. We could not find him during the forenoon, but he came in after we sat down at dinner, much as on a former Sunday; this time, too, he looked much heated. Addison and Theodora bent their eyes on their plates, but nothing was said by any one. Halstead ate hurriedly, with covert glances around. He seemed disturbed or excited, and after dinner went out in the garden alone, keeping aloof, but came up to our room late that evening, after I was abed.

At length I fell asleep, but immediately a noise like scratching or squeaking on the window pane, roused me suddenly. The window was on the back side of the house, but there was a driveway beneath it, and any one outside could, with a very long stick, reach up to the glass panes. It had grown dark, but when the noise waked me, I found that Halstead was sitting on the side of the bed, as if listening.

"What was that?" I said, sleepily.

"Oh, nothing," replied Halse. "The wind rattled the window, I guess."

I recollect thinking, that there was no wind that night, and I believe I said so, but I was very sleepy, and although I thought it queer that Halse should be sitting up to hear the wind, I soon fell into a drowse again and probably snored, for my room-mate often accused me of that offense.

I had not fallen soundly asleep, however, when I again heard the tapping at the window. A sly impulse, suggested probably by Halstead's demeanor, prompted me to play 'possum and pretend that I had not waked this time. I even went on breathing hard, on that pretense.

Halstead was still sitting on the bed. He listened for a moment to my counterfeit breathing, then slid easily off and approached the window. It was already raised a little and rested on a New Testament which Gram always kept in our room. Halse gently shoved

the window higher and put out his head. The air of the quiet country night was very still, and I heard a hoarse whisper from the ground outside, although I could not distinguish the words.

"Yes," whispered Halstead in reply.

Then the whisper below resumed.

"I don't want to do that," said Halstead.

The whisper outside rejoined, at some length.

"Perhaps," answered Halse.

The other whisper continued.

"When?" asked Halstead.

The whisper replied for some moments.

"By eleven," Halse then said. "Not before."

Then there was a good deal of whispering beneath, and Halstead replied, "Well, I'll be there."

Not long after, he crept back to bed, I meantime continuing my fraudulent hard breathing, although by this time I was very much awake and consumed by curiosity and suspicion. For at least half an hour, Halse tossed and turned about, seeming to be very restless and uneasy; in fact, he was still turning, when I fell asleep in very truth.

When I first waked next morning, I did not recollect this circumstance of the previous evening; in fact, it did not come into my mind till we had gone out to milk the cows. I then began to think it over earnestly and continued doing so throughout the forenoon. At first I had no thought of telling any one what I had heard, for although Halse had recently threatened me, I did not wish to play the spy on him.

But the idea that something wrong was on foot grew very strong within me. The more I pondered the circumstances the more certain I felt of it. At length I concluded to speak of it to Theodora; for some reason my choice of a confidante fell instinctively on her.

We were "cultivating" the corn that forenoon with old Sol, and hoeing it for the second time. Finally,

I made an excuse to go to the house for a jug of sweetened water. While preparing it, I found opportunity to call Theodora into the wood-shed, and first exacting a promise of secrecy from her, I told her what had occurred the previous evening.

She seemed surprised at first, then terrified, and I went back to the field with my jug, leaving her greatly disturbed.

When we came in at noon, she motioned me aside in the pantry and said hurriedly, that I must tell Addison and ask him to speak with her after dinner.

Twice during the afternoon we saw Theodora out in sight of the corn-field, and I knew that she was anxiously looking for a word or sign from Addison. At last, towards supper time, taking advantage of a few minutes when Halse had gone to the horse pasture with old Sol, I briefly mentioned the thing to Addison and proffered Theodora's request for an interview.

Addison listened with a frown. "I think I know who that was under the window," said he. "Halse has been running round with him, on the sly, for a month, and they've got some kind of a 'dido' planned out."

"Suppose it is anything bad?" I queried.

"Oh, I don't know," said Ad, impatiently. "Bad enough, I'll warrant you. If it is the fellow I think it is, he is an out-and-out 'tough' and a blackguard. One of those chaps that are hanging round Tibbett's rum shop out at the Corners. You may be sure that a man of that stamp isn't whispering around under windows, for any good."

"Why, you don't suppose they were planning to steal, or rob, do you?" I asked, much startled.

"Who knows," replied Addison, coolly. "Halse is a strange boy. He is just rattle-headed and foolish enough to get coaxed into some scrape that will dis-

grace him and all the rest of us. I never saw a fellow in my life so lacking in good sense.

"Oh yes, I'll talk with Doad," continued Ad, somewhat impatiently. "Doad is a good girl. She thinks moral suasion and generosity will do everything. But if I had Halse to manage, I would put him under lock and key, every night," said Addison, striking his hoe sharply into the ground.

"And if we only let him alone, I guess he will get there, of his own accord," he added with a fine irony.

I saw quite plainly that, as Theodora had once said to me, Addison had no patience with Halstead and his but too evident weakness of character.

"I don't like to run to the Old Squire with all that I see and hear," Addison went on, in a low tone, for Gramp was hoeing only a few steps behind us, and Halstead was now coming back from the pasture. "For they all think now that I don't like Halse and that I am too hard on him. But they will find out who is in the right about it."

After supper I saw Theodora in earnest conversation with Addison, out in the garden by the bee-house. Doad was a great friend of the bees; if she were wanted and not in the house, we generally looked first for her in the garden, in the vicinity of the bee-house.

Later in the evening, after we had finished milking and were going into the dairy with our pails, Addison said to me that it was best, he thought, to say nothing to the old folks just yet. "Doad wants me to watch to-night and, if Halse gets up to go off anywhere, to stop him and coax him back to his room.

"It isn't a job I like," continued Addison, "but perhaps we had better try it; Doad thinks so.

"So if you can keep awake, till ten or eleven, you had better," Addison went on. "If he gets up to start off, ask him where he is going, and if he really

starts, come and call me, and we will go after him. I can dress in a minute."

To this proposal I agreed, and I may add here that at about eleven o'clock we surprised Halse in the act of stealing away to the Corners, but after some parley and a scuffle with him, succeeded in getting him back to bed, and I lodged with Addison.

It was but a short night thenceforward till five o'clock in the morning. Before going down-stairs we peeped into Halse's room, to see if he were there still. He lay soundly asleep. Addison closed the door softly. "Poor noodle," said he, as we got the milk pails. "Let him snooze awhile. I suppose it isn't really his fault that he has got such a head on his shoulders. He is rather to be pitied, after all. He is his own worst enemy.

"I've heard," Ad continued in a low tone, as we opened the barnyard gate, "that Aunt Ysabel, Halse's mother, was a sort of queer, tempery, flighty person."

The Old Squire had got out a little in advance of us and sat milking. "Good morning, boys," said he, looking up cheerily, as we passed. "Another fine day. The whole country looks bright and smiling. Grand year for crops."

"We will not say a word to him about our scrape with Halse last night," Addison remarked to me. "There's no use plaguing him with it. We cost him so much and give him so much trouble, that I am ashamed to let him know of this."

When we took in the milk, Theodora was grinding coffee (and how good it smelled! She had just roasted it in the stove oven). "We got him back all right, with no great difficulty," Addison whispered to her, in passing.

"Oh, I'm so glad," she replied.

Halse had not come down; and pretty soon we heard the Old Squire call him, at which Addison laughed a little as he glanced at me.

At breakfast Halstead looked somewhat glum; in fact, he did not look at Addison and me at all, if he could avoid it.

That forenoon we hoed corn again and talked a good deal of the Fourth of July celebration which was to come off at the village the following week.

Toward noon, however, word was sent us that the husband of a cousin of the Old Squire's who resided in the town adjoining, to the eastward, had suddenly died, and that the funeral was to be at two o'clock that afternoon.

No one of the family seemed much disposed to attend it. It appeared that the deceased had not been a highly respected citizen. It was said that he had died from the effects of a fit of intoxication. The liquor which drunkards were able to obtain, by hook or crook, at that period and in spite of the Prohibitory Law, was of a peculiarly deleterious character.

At dinner the Old Squire remarked that he should attend the funeral, and that I could go with him, if I liked, but that the others might be excused. I at once accepted the invitation; almost anything was preferable to hoeing corn in the hot sun.

It was a pleasant ride of eight miles along the county road to the northeastward. We first passed numerous farms, then a "mud pond" and a "clear water pond," following afterwards the valley of a small river between two high, wooded mountains, till we came at last to a saw-mill, grist-mill and a few houses at a place whimsically known as the "city." Here in a little weathered house the last rites and services to the deceased were held. Elder Witham, still in his duster, preached a short discourse during which I felt somewhat distressed to hear him express certain doubts as to the man's future state. The Elder was a thoroughly upright Yankee and Methodist, who tried to preach the truth and the gospel, as he apprehended it; he did not believe that all a person's faults

are, or ought to be, forgiven at his death. I remember the following words which he made use of on that occasion, for they appealed to some nascent sense of logic in me, I suppose: "The evil which men do in this life lives on in the world after they die; and even so the just penalty for it continues with them in a future state."

The Old Squire, although ordinarily a kind and reasonable man, yet possessed some of the same severe traits of character, which have descended in the sons of New England, from the days of the Puritans. I remember that he said, as we drove along the road, going homeward: "The death of a drunkard is a shameful end. Such a person can expect other people to mourn only for his folly."

But these sentiments made far less impression upon me then than the conduct of the wife of the dead man. I had somehow supposed that he was an old man; but instead, he was only thirty-four years of age; and his wife was an auburn-haired, strong woman, not more than thirty, unusually handsome in face and form. She was in a state of great excitement, not wholly caused by sorrow. It appeared that there had been a violently bitter quarrel between the pair, the night before the man's death; and so far from having forgiven her husband, even then, the woman exhibited the turbulence of her temper and behaved in an unseemly manner during and after the services. Her outcries gave me a very strange impression and in fact so shocked and terrified me, that to this day I cannot recall the scene without a singular sensation of disquiet. Withal, it was the first funeral which I had ever attended. As a lad I was in not a little doubt on several points, touching the behavior of widows on such occasions; and as we drove homeward, I ventured to ask the Old Squire whether women were often liable to go on at funerals as that one did. For I remember thinking that if this were really the case,

I should never under any circumstances whatever, be allured into matrimony.

But the Old Squire at once said, positively, that they did not behave so, and that this woman (her name was Britannia) was an exception to all rules.

My next question upset him, however, for after a few moments of decent inward satisfaction over his reply, I asked him whether Britannia was a *Pepperill*.

Gramp turned half around on the wagon seat and looked at me in astonishment for an instant; he then burst out in a hearty laugh.

"No, no," said he. "She is no Pepperill, no connection whatever of your grandmother. The shoe is on the other foot. It's on my side this time."

He laughed again as he drove on; and just before we reached home, he told me, and seemed much in earnest that I should understand it, that the Pepperills were a very good family, as much or more so than the average, and that if I had got any different impression from anything I had heard said, it was utterly erroneous.

"You must never mind any of the nonsense I have over to your grandmother when we are at table," he continued. "It's all fun. We don't mean anything. Your grandma is the best woman I ever knew."

I replied that I had thought that was the way of it, myself. As the old gentleman had expressed himself so magnanimously toward the Pepperills, I at once resolved not to say a word to Gram, or any of the others, about this Britannia's behavior. I did not like to have Gramp put at any disadvantage in the family; so the old gentleman and I kept that incident quiet between us for a good many years.

CHAPTER XV

A WET FOURTH OF JULY, WITH A GOOD DEAL OF HUMAN NATURE IN IT

THE first days of July were very hot and sultry; the hoeing was finished; haying was at hand. We young folks, however, were now chiefly interested in the Fourth of July celebration at the village, seven miles from the farm, and were laying our plans to go, all the previous day. In fact, the whole family intended to go.

If we were to get the farm chores done, breakfast eaten and reach the village by six o'clock, in time to see the procession of "fantastics" we would have to be astir by three in the morning. Addison proposed to harness old Sol and Nancy to the hay-rack, decorate it with green oak boughs, making a canopy over it, and all ride to town together, taking up six or eight of our neighbors, to swell the party.

Theodora and Ellen hailed this plan with delight, but Gram objected both because of the fact that the hay-rack had no springs, and also upon grounds of decorum.

"Why, people would think we were a part of the 'fantastics,'" the old lady exclaimed. "I will never ride in any such gipsy fashion!"

This vigorous declaration tabled the hay-cart scheme. But as we were milking that evening, Addison obtained the Old Squire's consent to harness Nancy into the horse-cart, and decorate it for us young folks; while our elders drove to the village with old Sol in the beach-wagon. Boughs were ac-

cordingly fetched and a canopy made over the cart and by nine we all retired, so as to secure as much sleep as possible before three A. M.

But the Pluvian powers forbade the excursion. The southern sky, indeed, had looked a trifle dark and wet, the previous evening. Raindrops on the roof waked us shortly before three. We hoped it was but a passing shower. At daylight, however, the rain was pouring profusely. Wealthy actually cried; Ellen scolded a little; Halstead made certain irreverent remarks; while Gram sought to inculcate resignation in the abstract.

It proved one of those profuse southerly rains, such as often occur in Maine during the summer season. We milked in the barn and put the cows out to pasture in the midst of the downpour, for it was a warm rain.

"No celebration to-day," remarked Addison; but the Old Squire thought that it would slacken by noon and perhaps clear.

All the morning it rained too hard even to go fishing. Addison went up to his room to read Audubon awhile. Halstead went out to the wagon-house and having appropriated an auger, draw-shave and hammer, took an umbrella and set off for the old cooper shop below the orchard. Seeing me standing in the wood-house door, he said, "You can go down to my shop, if you want to. I wouldn't invite Addison, but I will you."

I ran out to his umbrella, and we went down to the old shop. When we reached the door, Halstead remarked that I need not *see* the way he opened it; so I stepped around the corner for a moment, till he called to me. I then entered after him and stood around while he set to work on several odd-looking pieces of wheeled gear. Then with his permission, I kindled a little fire in the large old fireplace, and dried my clothes before it.

"I tell ye that's a cute place to roast sweet corn ears," Halstead remarked. "In the fall I have a fire here evenings and roast corn; I did last fall and you and I will this next fall. It's jolly fun, after the nights get cool; I would like to sleep down here, but the old gent wants me to sleep in the house; I made a bunk of shavings and set out to stay one night before my fire, but he came down and knocked at the door about ten o'clock. He said I had better go up to the house.

"The old gent is awful particular about a fellow being out after dark," Halstead continued. "I ain't used, myself, to being bossed round so, and treated as if I was a child that hadn't cut my teeth yet. I've seen something of the world and can take care of number one, anywheres. It ain't as if I was a little green chap. I've lived out among folks, till I came 'way back here. I suppose the old gent and all the rest of them think, that I don't know any more and must be looked after just like one of these little greenhorns round here. It's a great bore to me to be treated that way and I don't like it at all. It makes me mad sometimes. A fellow that has travelled and seen something, wants more liberty."

I could see that he was talking around to lead up to something he wished to tell me, and so said nothing.

"Now the other night," Halstead continued, "all I was going off for was to get some money of a fellow who owes me out at the Corners; I wanted to get it bad, for I wanted to pay you and the girls what I owe you. I knew you wanted it for the Fourth and I wanted to pay it; so I thought I would slip out to the Corners, and see this fellow and get it of him, for he had promised me I should have it that night. I felt ructious that I couldn't go, for of course a fellow wants to pay his honest debts, and it's kinder hard when he can't."

I mentally set this down as one of the things that are important, if true; it was pretty plain to me, however, that Halstead was hedging, and making up a story which he thought suited to my understanding. I did not like to hear him go on, and contrived to change the conversation.

Halstead was in one of his good moods that morning, and as he worked with the draw-shave, he cast knowing, proud glances first at the wheeled contrivance, then at me. I concluded that he wanted me to inquire about it and so asked what it was for.

"A wind-mill," said he. "It will be a buster, too! I'll show 'em a thing or two 'round here. I mean to run a lathe with it here at the shop and do wood turning. I'll turn banisters, rolling-pins, gingerbread creasers and all sorts of things. I can make lots of money off a lathe. I'm going to set the wind-mill up on a tall post at the corner of the shop here, and then have a pulley shaft clean across this whole side of it. Won't it just hum though!"

I grew considerably interested in the proposed wind-mill, as Halse explained it. He really had some ideas of a lathe, run by wind power, and went on for some time telling me of his plans, till Ellen called us to dinner.

It continued to rain till past two o'clock, when the clouds broke away and the sun came forth very hot and bright.

"Shall we go?" was now the question. "Will there be a celebration now the day is so far advanced?"

The Old Squire thought it hardly worth the while to set off, assuredly not in the bough-embowered cart. Gram and the girls therefore decided to give up going altogether, but we three boys at length harnessed old Sol into the express wagon and started; for we hoped to see the fireworks in the evening and perhaps the

sack-race and wheelbarrow-race which had been set for afternoon.

The meadow brook was swollen high out its banks and flowed into the grass on both sides, and the wet road was full of puddles through which old Sol splashed prosaically on. There were very few teams on the road. Alfred Batchelder, the two Murch boys and Ned Wilbur overtook us, however, when we had nearly reached the village, all four riding on one seat of an old wagon. We found, too, that Thomas Edwards and Catherine had come to the village, in advance of us. Catherine came out from one of the stores to ask us whether Theodora and Ellen had come; she seemed much disappointed to learn that they had not, and that she was the only girl from our neighborhood who had ventured forth.

Despite the wet, a crowd of three or four hundred persons, mostly boys or young men, had collected in front of the Elm House, where they were popping off firecrackers and playing pranks. Zest was presently lent to these latter efforts, by the continuous explosion of half a bunch of crackers beneath the wagon seat of a young farmer who, with his sister, or some other young lady, was sitting in a wagon on the outskirts of the crowd, looking on. Both of them were smiling broadly. In the rear end of their wagon was a butter firkin and a number of packages. Some rogue lighted the crackers and tossed them directly beneath the wagon seat, and immediately they began to pop off. Their horse gave a bound; smoke and sparks flew, and after a moment the girl jumped clear of the wagon and landed nimbly on her feet two yards away! She looked very wild, indeed, and did not relish the joke; for an urchin in the crowd, attempting to follow it up by covertly dropping a lighted cracker near her feet, was instantly detected and received such a box on the ear as set him howling.

Meantime the youthful farmer had no small ado to

quiet his nag. When the animal and the crackers had at length subsided into quiet, he began to look about for the girl. His nerves were not of the highly strung variety; he looked out for his horse first; he was not much excited, and smiled broadly when Angelina came forward to climb into the wagon again, but he was heard to remark in a slightly quickened tone, "By Gaul, 'f I could find out who throwed them firecrackers, I'd lick him, I would, I swan."

He gazed about over the crowd, with an inquiring eye, as one honestly on the lookout for accurate information; and although everybody had laughed uproariously, no one now claimed the honor of having started the fun.

Evidently a mischievous spirit possessed the crowd. In fact, when a great concourse of people has gathered in expectation of a good time, and has been balked of the fun, it is well to be wary and keep aloof. Something is pretty certain to happen, and somebody is likely to be made a victim of the general disappointment. In such a case the most prudent thing is to go quietly home.

While all stood laughing and gaping at young Agricola and his fair companion, another hubbub broke out. A cracker suddenly exploded in the outer pocket of a long linen duster, worn by a tall youth who at that moment had his mouth widely distended with laughter. He clapped his hand to his pocket, when another went off there. With that he whirled around, the lengthy skirts of the "duster" floating out in a circle amidst a wreath of blue powder smoke. *Snap-fizz* went another and another cracker, the sparks flying and an odor of burnt cloth beginning to pervade the air. The crowd, shouting in fresh glee, speedily drew out from the new victim and formed a ring about him.

"Enoch, you're all afire!" exclaimed one of his acquaintances. "Throw off yer duster."

This was sound advice and would probably have been acted upon by "Enoch;" but some one else cried, "Down and roll over."

The adage advising all whose clothes take fire, to roll on the floor, or the ground, has become pretty firmly fixed in the public mind; and hearing it, Enoch at once threw himself down and rolled over and over in the road, to the accompaniment of a tremendous shout. The maneuver did not much improve matters; for a lot of crackers had been dropped into the duster pocket. These continued to pop off, in twos and threes; and the more alarmingly they popped, the more vigorously Enoch rolled! A more laughable spectacle, for the onlookers, can hardly be imagined. The tall fellow's arms and legs flew about in a wonderful manner; the smoke and sparks flew, too, and every time a cracker snapped, Enoch howled.

Somebody at length ran forward with a pailful of water that was set on the tavern piazza, and dashed it over him, and withal the road was still very muddy from the rain. When the water fell over him, he scrambled to his feet; the crackers had snapped themselves out. But oh, sorrows, what a fearfully singed and muddy object was Enoch! His own mother would have looked coldly on him; and the unsympathetic crowd screamed with delight.

But Enoch had arisen in a somber frame of mind; and it was at once apparent that something was going to be done about it, and that somebody must settle the account with him. He cast a rueful glance over his personal remnants, then a wrathy one at the laughter-shaken crowd, took a step forward and giving vent to certain emphatic remarks, declared, "The feller that did that has got to suffer!"

Thereupon a group of five or six boys, among them our Halstead and Alfred Batchelder, not being upheld, perhaps, by the courage of entire innocence,

began to slink away and get behind others. In an instant Enoch was after them. They took to their heels around to the rear of the tavern, the crowd shouting, "Catch 'em! Give it to 'em! Go it, Enoch!"

There was a rush to see the denouement. Neither Addison, nor I, witnessed all which took place. The chase had led the principals far around to the rear of a stable and sheds. At length, we saw Halstead and Alfred on the roof of the latter, and heard cries of dismay and distress from others of the runaway party; Enoch was with them, evidently.

Alfred and Halse continued hastily to climb to the ridge-pole of the stable and then walked along on the roof of an ell, till they gained the higher roof of the tavern itself. Presently Enoch came back from the rear and espying the refugees aloft, began to stone them with vigor, till the proprietor came out and ordered all parties to the fracas to desist and leave the premises.

Addison and I now crossed the street and joined Thomas and Kate Edwards, who were standing on the platform of a store opposite, spectators at a distance of what had taken place. After a time Halse came to us, having made a circuit of several buildings from the rear of the Elm House. He had the generally rumpled appearance of a boy who has been roughly handled. Occasionally he nursed and rubbed certain spots upon his person.

"Did he hit ye?" inquired Thomas, good-humoredly.

"Yes, he did," muttered Halse. "The old long-legged loafer! I wish he had all burnt up!"

"Did you put the crackers in his pocket?" asked Catherine, laughing.

"No, I didn't," replied Halse. "But I know who did," he added, with a knowing nod. "And I know who lit the match, too."

"You seem to know quite a good deal about it," commented Catherine.

"He needn't have stoned me!" cried Halse. "He had no proof against me. But I'll pay him out."

"I guess you had better let Enoch alone," said Addison.

Meantime the sun had come out very hot; it was already five o'clock. Kate persuaded Thomas to carry her to visit an acquaintance of theirs, living somewhere on the outskirts of the village. We lingered about for a time, then some one of the crowd of boys proposed going up to the outlet of the lake, above the dam, to go in swimming. The heat rendered this proposal agreeable; and as many as fifty set off together, some intending to go into the water, others to sit in the shade and watch the swimmers. Enoch, minus his duster, with a number of his friends, was in the party, observing which Alfred and Halse kept at a respectful distance in the rear. Ned Wilbur and Willis and Ben Murch went along with Addison and me.

The distance up to the "swimming hole" was near half a mile; there was a pretty bit of white, sandy shore, shelving off from shoal into deep water. In a few minutes, twenty or thirty were splashing, wading and swimming out, some boldly, as good swimmers will, others timidly, or feigning to swim and taking good care not to get into water over their heads.

And all along shore the grass was dotted with small heaps, capped with white, representing each bather's temporarily discarded wearing apparel, beside which were set his holiday shoes or boots.

It is the common, unwritten code among boys on such occasions, that while in the water, each swimmer's clothes are to be held sacred from molestation, even by his sworn enemies; at least, that was the "law," as the writer understood it, in the year 1866.

To meddle with another boy's clothes while he was in the water was deemed an outlaw act.

Alfred and Halse, however, who had approached in the rear, and observed Enoch's wardrobe lying unguarded on the shore, determined to redress their grievances by making a descent upon it, while he was in the pond. Ned and I, who were sitting under a large maple a little back from the stream, saw them peering about the heaps of clothes, like a couple of crows plotting larceny from a robin's nest. We had little idea what they were about to do, however, for they walked away, and it was not till ten minutes afterwards that we saw them again, this time with Alfred's horse and wagon, up in the road, a hundred yards or more from the water.

"Why, Alf's going home!" Ned exclaimed. "I came down with him and I must go back with him, unless I walk." "Don't go yet," I said. "You can ride back with us. We are going to stay till evening."

"All right, I will," replied Ned. "I don't like to go with Alf very well; he is always 'sassing' folks on the road.

"But they have stopped up there," Ned added. "Alf's got out and is coming down here. Perhaps it's to call me to go home. He is picking up stones. What suppose he is going to do?"

We watched him curiously. Halse sat in the wagon, holding the reins, but Alf was stealing down to the shore, and he seemed to have a stone as large as one's fist in each hand.

"You don't suppose he is going to stone Enoch and run?" queried Ned, in some excitement. "There'll be high jinks, if he does."

I thought that was the intention, and called out in a low tone to Addison, who was coming out of the water, a few rods off, to come to us. But before he had more than heard me, Alfred slipped down past an alder clump, to the spot where Enoch's clothes lay,

and quickly tucking a stone into each of his boots, threw them off into deep water, then snatching up his pile of clothes, ran for the wagon.

They had the trick adroitly planned out, and he was not half a minute executing it. Before an outcry was more than raised and the alarm wafted out to Enoch, or his friends, Alfred and our Halstead were rattling off up the road at a great rate.

But when the fact really dawned upon the crowd of boys, there was a roar of indignant exclamations, and only a very few laughed this time. "After them!" was the first shout. "Catch them!" — and some said, "Drown 'em!"

Not many were in a condition to make pursuit, however. The perpetrators of the outrage easily escaped; they were a mile off, indeed, before the most of the swimmers were dressed.

Poor Enoch was now in bad straits. He and three or four others began diving for his boots, but failed to bring them up.

Addison was much disturbed. He gave Enoch his undershirt, and another boy endowed him with a pair of drawers. With these donations, they got him out of the bushes, and forming a close circle round him, escorted him barefoot and bareheaded to one of the village stores, where he was rigged up — on credit — so that he could go home. There was a great deal of joking, yet the prevalent feeling was one of indignation; and if the two tricksters had been caught that afternoon, they would have fared badly, and probably taken a ride on a rail. Altogether, it had been a bad day for Enoch; but for popular sympathy, he would not only have lost his "duster," but been obliged to scud home under bare poles.

At sunset we bought crackers and cheese for our supper. Ned and the two Murch boys were now of our party, but Thomas and Catherine had gone home. We were but slightly repaid for waiting till evening,

however; only six rockets, five Roman candles and two "pin-wheels" were burned in the way of fireworks. It was very soon over, although we had been obliged to wait until a quarter to nine for the exhibition to begin. Boy-like, however, we would not have missed it for a great deal.

Then came the long ride homeward in the dark, for the night proved cloudy; but the events of the day furnished us a great deal to talk of, as old Sol plodded onward, — and there was more to follow.

We had gone about half way home, and were passing a partly wooded tract on the upper or west side of the highway, when Willis suddenly said, "What's that thing, hanging down from that tree over the road?"

"I don't see anything," replied Addison.

"I tell you there is!" muttered Willis, excitedly. "Hold on, Ad. Stop."

Addison pulled up.

"Yes, there is something there," Ned said.

I was sure, too, that I could see something different from the branches and leaves of the tree; there was a reflection as from white cloth, or human skin.

"It looks like a man hanging there," whispered Willis.

"Gracious! You don't suppose it is a man, hung, do ye?" Ned whispered.

The idea startled us.

"Pshaw!" said Addison. "I don't believe it is any such thing. May be something some one has lost in the road, and somebody else has found it and hung it up there, where it will be seen."

"Perhaps," said Willis, doubtfully.

"I'm going to drive along, anyway," continued Addison.

"No, don't. Hold on, Ad. Don't," whispered Ned, for the thing did have a curious appearance.

Addison persisted and slapped old Sol gently with

the reins. The rest of us cringed down as low as we could, for we did not like the looks of the object, or the thought of passing close under it. But just as we had got under it, Addison said, "Whoa," and old Sol stopped short.

"Drive on, Ad, drive on," whispered Ned, nervously.

"No," said Addison. "I'm going to see what that is. Take the reins," and he gave them to me. "I can reach it by standing upon the seat."

Addison raised himself slowly, and finding that he could reach the object, began to feel it with his hand.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed suddenly. "'Tis a man's stocking, *on his foot!*"

"Ah-h-h!" quavered Ned. "Let's get from under!" He grabbed spasmodically at the reins and gave a shake. Old Sol took a step, and Addison tumbled partly over Willis and Ben, who both gave a howl of nervous apprehension.

"Quit that!" cried Addison, angrily, to me. "Stop, I tell you. You hold that horse."

I pulled old Sol up short and he backed a little, at which Ned jumped out and ran on a few steps; Willis and Ben also slipped out behind.

"Hold still," said Addison to me. "Don't let the horse start and pitch me out."

With that he stood up again and began feeling the object. "'Tis a man's trouser leg, sure — and stocking — but there's something odd inside. Who's got a match?"

Ben had a few matches, with which he had been touching off firecrackers earlier in the day, and ventured up to the back of the wagon. Addison stood up again and struck one, while the rest of us stared as the match burned slowly.

It is a stuffed man," cried Addison; "a scarecrow, I guess, stuffed with grass. But where have

I seen those checkered pants before, to-day? — and, boys, here is a paper, pinned on to them higher up. Back the horse a little."

I backed a step, and Addison, striking another match, read aloud on the piece of paper, "THIS IS ENOCH."

"Oho!" cried Ned. "Alf and Halse did that!"

"Yes, these are Enoch's clothes, sure," said Addison. "There's his hat on a big pine knot for a head, with his pocket handkerchief tied round it for a face, and great daubs of wheel grease for mouth, eyes and nose."

"Well, that's a queer sort of joke!" remarked Willis.

"I'm glad they didn't carry Enoch's clothes clean home with them," said I.

"I was afraid they had," Addison remarked; "and I was thinking whether or not he could make it out as stealing, against them."

"Had we better take them down and send them back to him?" I asked.

"No, sir-ee," said Addison. "We will not meddle with them. Enoch may send the sheriff up here by morning. It would be a pretty go if the clothes were found in our possession. Let them hang right where they are, I say, and let's be going, too, before any one comes along and catches us here!"

We drove on accordingly, and reached home without further adventures. The house was dark; all had retired, except Theodora, who was sitting at her window looking out for us. She came down stairs quietly, lighted a lamp and had set on a lunch for us by the time we came in from the wagon-house. They had gathered three quarts of field strawberries that afternoon and had saved a quart for us. They were the first strawberries of the season. How good they did taste, hungry as we were that night, along with some big slices of Gram's new "mug bread"

and butter, and a plentiful swig of lemonade, a pitcherful of which Theodora had also set aside for us.

"Doad!" cried Addison, giving her a pat on the shoulder. "You are the boss girl of this county!"

"Oh, I wanted to hear all the Fourth o' July news," said Theodora. "Now tell me. But don't talk so loud, or you will wake Gramp and Gram."

"The news, well, jingo, I don't know whether we ought to tell it all, or not; what think?" said Addison to me, doubtfully.

"Has Halse got home?" I asked.

"Yes, he came just before supper. He said he rode up *with a fellow* as far as the forks of the road," replied Theodora.

"Did he say why he left us and came home so early?" asked Addison.

"Yes; he said there was nothing going on, and he had got tired of loafing around."

Addison laughed; so did I.

"But I knew there was something behind it all," Theodora continued. "Now what was it?"

"Nothing — much," replied Addison, evasively.

"Oh, but there was," exclaimed Theodora. "Tell me."

"Nothing but the usual 'circus,' when Halse goes out anywhere," replied Addison wearily, yet still laughing a little.

"But tell me what it was," Theodora urged.

With a certain reluctance which boys always feel, to divulge circumstances that pertain mainly to boys and boys' affairs, we related to her the salient events of the afternoon, for it would have been a bad return for her kindness to us to have refused altogether, and we felt, too, that her motive was something more than mere curiosity.

Theodora was a fun-loving girl by nature; she laughed over the snap-cracker episodes, and laughed, indeed, at the Elm House roof exploit, and even could

not help laughing at Alfred and Halse's final trick with Enoch's clothes.

"But that *was* mean," she kept saying. "What do you suppose he will do? Will he have them arrested?"

"No, I guess not," replied Addison. "I think it will pass as a joke. Enoch will probably get his clothes back, in a day or two, if not his boots."

"But he declared he would give Alf and Halse an awful licking the first time he meets them out anywheres," I said.

"Well, I shouldn't much blame him, I do say, if he did," observed Theodora, laughing again.

"I would if I were he," said Addison. "You see, they begun on Enoch in the first place."

Just then we heard a little creaking noise in the chamber stairway.

"Sh," whispered Theodora. "I believe Halse is there, on the stairs, listening."

"Well, listeners rarely hear much good of themselves," said Addison, loudly enough for him to hear it. We heard still another little creaking noise, this time higher up the stairs, as if he were tiptoeing back to his room.

"I am sorry if he overheard us," Theodora remarked in a low tone, as we got up to go to our rooms.

"I don't care," said Addison. "What could he expect any one to say of a mean thing like that?"

When I entered our room, Halse was in bed, and pretended to snore.

"Oh, that's too thin, Halse," said I. "We heard you on the stairs."

"You are a couple of tell-tales!" he exclaimed, hotly. "To come home and chatter out everything that happened, to the girls!"

There was some little force in the reproach, and I did not at once reply to it.

"Tell-tale, tell-tale!" he kept calling out, tauntingly, as I was undressing.

"You just wait till Enoch gets hold of you!" I remarked, beginning to grow irritated.

"I'm not afraid of any of your Enochs!" cried Halse.

"What were you on the top of the Elm House for, then?" I asked, sarcastically. "I wouldn't like to be in your shoes the next time Enoch gets his eye on you."

"If he touches me, I'll fix him!" cried Halstead, wrathfully. "And I'll slap you, too, if you don't keep still," he added, giving me a kick under the bedspread, which I did not quite dare to resent, and so turned over to the wall and fell asleep.

Thus ended our first Fourth of July at the farm.

I must add a word here relative to Enoch's clothes, however. The effigy hung there over the road for two days; but word had been sent to Enoch, who lived in another town, and on the third day he made his appearance for the purpose of reclaiming his garments; but meantime, either that morning or the previous evening, the effigy was stolen, or at least captured and carried off. The latter offense was finally traced to a passing tin-peddler, who, when accused of it, declared that he had found the image lying in the road, and deemed the clothes old togs, fit only for paper rags and not worth advertising; he had therefore put them in his cart and driven on. He was subsequently shown to have sold the suit, not as paper rags; and when threatened with legal proceedings, he settled the matter on Enoch's own terms.

On the first day of the "Cattle Show," or County Fair, that fall, Enoch fell in with Alfred Batchelder, in the rear of the cattle sheds, and, to make use of a phrase common among fighting characters, "wiped up the ground with him" — not over clean ground,

either — for a space of several minutes. Our Halstead steered clear of him, however, and so far as I know, never received his just deserts for his share in the transaction, — which may, perhaps, be said to lie in the line of a remark which Elder Witham was fond of making in his quaint sermon against the Universalists. "Justice," quoth the Elder, "certainly does not get done in this brief, imperfect life of ours. Many of the worst wrongs men do us go unredressed in spite of our best efforts to square accounts with them!"

I recollect, also, that as we had unharnessed old Sol in the wagon-house that night and led him out, we noticed a great light in the sky, away to the southward. It shone up high in the heavens, but was pale, as if a long distance off. I asked Addison what he thought it could be, and he said there must be a great fire somewhere in that direction. We thought no more about it at the time; but toward evening next day a rumor reached us, afterwards confirmed, that a great part of the city of Portland had burned, entailing a loss of nearly or quite twenty millions of dollars.

But along with all these distracting incidents of the Fourth of July, there was a bit of seriousness and worry that lingered in a back nook of my mind, connected with that funeral which the Old Squire and I had attended. I felt that there was something, some question concerning it, which I must solve, or settle, before I could feel right again. I had never seen a person lying dead before; I tried not to think about it and in part succeeded, when there were a good many other things going on, yet all the time I knew that it was there in my mind and must be thought about before long. When I was very tired and first shut my eyes, on lying down at night, I would see that man in his coffin so plainly that I would fairly jump in bed, and then have to turn over

several times and begin talking with Halstead, somewhat to his annoyance, for without quite understanding it, I suppose, he yet perceived that it was not a genuine conversational effort.

During the days following the Fourth, this impression of death which had entered my mind began to assume more definite limits, and grew pertinent to my own status. I had heard that the average age of man was thirty-three years, and granting that I should reach that age, I could expect to live a little over twenty years more. That was a long time, to be sure, twenty years; but it would pass, and at the end of it I should have to die and look as that man looked, and be buried in the ground. The thought of it caused me to gasp suddenly, and filled me with a sense of terror and despair so awful that I could scarcely restrain myself from crying out. Most young people, I conjecture, pass through a similar mental experience, when the drear fact of death is first realized.

It continued to weigh heavily on my mind; and by way of relief from it, I followed Theodora out into the garden the next Sunday evening, and after quite an effort, opened the subject with her. There was no one else with whom I could have summoned resolution to broach that topic.

"Did you ever see anybody after they were dead?" I asked her.

She did not seem very much surprised at the question, since it was Sabbath eve. "Do you mean their body?" she inquired.

"Yes, their body," I replied.

"I have seen three," she said, at length.

"Didn't it make you feel strange?" I asked. "It did me. It is an awful thing to die and be put down into the ground, with all that earth on one."

"Oh, but they don't know it," said Theodora. "It is only their dead bodies; their spirits are far away."

"Yes," I said, "but I cannot help thinking of their

bodies, and that it is them still, only they cannot wake up and speak."

"Oh, no, their spirits are far away," replied my gentle cousin, confidently.

"But that man, the one whose funeral Gramp and I went to, he died intoxicated. Where do you honestly think he is now?" I asked her.

"It's a dreadful thing to think of," replied Theodora, solemnly. "You know the Bible says, no drunkard can go to heaven."

"Then he will be burned forever and ever and ever, won't he?" I said.

"I suppose he will," she said, and taking out her handkerchief, she wiped her eyes sadly.

"Do you think it will be real fire and that it will smart just as it does when we burn our fingers?" I asked her.

"Maybe worse," Theodora replied, again wiping her eyes. "But sometimes I cannot believe that it will be all the time, night and day, year after year. Maybe it is wicked to hope it will not be, but I do want to think *that they would stop sometimes.* Universalists teach that nobody will be punished at all after they die; but Gram thinks they are not real Christians. Our folks all believe that the wicked will be punished forever, and the Bible does say so, I suppose. Grandmother says that all the great Bible scholars agree that the wicked will be punished."

"What does Ad think?" I asked, at length.

"I don't know. I'm afraid that he doesn't think at all," replied Theodora. "The thing I do not like in Cousin Addison is that he will never take a serious view of these important questions. The time he had the measles, he was very sick one day, and I said that I hoped that his mind was at peace. He looked at me as if he were a little frightened at first, for I suppose he thought that I thought that he was going to die, for I did begin in a sort of clumsy way. His head

was swelled nearly as big again as it ought to have been, and he looked very queer about the eyes. 'O Doad!' he exclaimed, 'please do talk of things that you know something about.' But of course he felt peevish, being so sick."

"I suppose he did," said I. "But isn't it awful that everybody's got to die — and no getting away from it?"

"Yes, it does make any one feel dreadfully sad," Theodora assented. "But the good will be better off."

I did not gain much comfort from the conversation, however, and for years thereafter the thought of death filled me with the same choking sense of terror.

CHAPTER XVI

WOOD-CHUCKS IN THE CLOVER — ADDISON'S STRATAGEM

CREAMERIES with ice-chests were as yet unheard of in the rural counties of Maine in 1866. At the old farm, all of the dairy milk was set in pans on the clean, cool cellar bottom. As the warm mornings of midsummer drew on, Gram was usually up by five o'clock, attending to her cream and butter; and about this time, as we issued drowsily forth, in response to the Old Squire's early rap, we were repeatedly startled at hearing a sudden eldritch exclamation which was half scream, at the foot of the bulkhead stairs.

"What's the matter down there, Ruth?" the Old Squire would exclaim.

"Dear me, I've stepped on that hateful toad again!" Gram would reply. "It's always under foot there! Do, Ellen, you get the tongs and carry that toad off again. Carry him away out to the foot of the garden, below the currant bushes. I don't see how he is forever getting back to the foot of those stairs! It gives me such a start, to put my foot on him!"

And Gram would have to sit down for a time, to fan herself and to recover her composure.

"Well, Ruth, I should think it would give the toad a start, too," the Old Squire would comment, dryly.

Meantime Ellen or Addison would proceed to capture the toad — a fine, big brown chunk of a toad —

and exile him to the garden. Once Ellen carried him, wriggling in the tongs, around to the back side of the west barn. Ad, too, carried him out into the orchard one night. But by the next day, or the day following, toady would be back at the foot of the bulkhead stairs again. There is no doubt that it was the same toad, and he certainly must have possessed a good sense of locality. We could not for some time imagine how he obtained entrance to the cellar, for he returned to his favorite cool spot on days when the outer bulkhead door was closed. Addison at length decided that he must have got in by way of the cellar drain, on the back side of the house.

It was contrary to all the homely traditions at the farm to kill or maltreat a toad. Not less than seven times was that toad carefully carried away into the garden, or down the lane.

At last Gram's patience was exhausted. Her ire rose. "I'll see if you come back into my cellar again, old fellow," she exclaimed, before breakfast one morning after the recusant batrachian had been transported the night before. This time the old lady seized the tongs herself, and marched out into the yard, holding toady with no gentle pinch on his rotund body.

"Ellen, you bring me a quart of that brine out of the beef barrel," she called back to the kitchen.

Then having put the toad down in the cart road leading out into the fields, she dashed him with brine, and as he hopped away pursued him with further douches.

It is not likely that the brine injured the reptile very much, but for some reason it never came back.

For a long time thereafter the Old Squire was accustomed to touch up Gram's conscience now and then, by making sly allusion to her hard-heartedness and cruelty in "pickling toads."

The Old Squire, too, had his bucolic enemies as well as Gram.

Wheet-wh-wh-wh-wh-wheedle! was a note we now began to hear daily about the stone walls and in the fields of new clover.

"Oh, those wood-chucks!" the old gentleman would exclaim. "They are making shocking work over in that new piece. Boys, I'll give you five cents a head for every wood-chuck you will kill off."

Amidst the now rapidly blossoming red clover we could see the fresh earth of numbers of their burrows, and almost every day a new one would be espied beside a rock or stone heap. June is the happy month for wood-chucks, in New England; they riot in the farmer's clover, and tunnel the soft hillsides with their holes. June is the month, too, when mother wood-chuck is leading out her four or five chubby little chucks, teaching them the fear of dogs and man, which constitutes the wisdom of a wood-chuck's life, and giving them their first lesson in that shrill, yet guttural note peculiar to wood-chuckdom, which country boys call "whistling."

It is remarkable how many wood-chucks will not only get a living, but wax fat on an old farm where the farmer himself has difficulty in making year's ends meet. Addison estimated that at one time there were seventy wood-chucks on the Old Squire's homestead, all prosperous and laying by something, metaphorically speaking, for a rainy day.

Despite all the evil that is said of the wood-chuck, too, he does in reality a much smaller amount of damage to man than one would imagine from the outcry against him. Occasionally, it is true, a chuck will begin nibbling at early pease, or beans, and do real, measurable harm, but the injury which he inflicts on the farmer in the hay-fields is generally much exaggerated. In the "south field" that year, there were two acres of red clover, where not less than seven

or eight wood-chucks dug new holes and threw out mounds of yellow earth, which in some places crushed down the crop. Then, too, in feeding and running about, they trampled on plats of the thick clover, particularly where it had "lodged" from its own rank growth. There were, in all, five or six square rods of the grass which it was not deemed worth while to attempt to mow at all, and the loss of which was due in part, but not wholly, to the wood-chucks. The hired men scolded about it, and Gramp himself, who had a farmer's natural aversion to wood-chucks, fretted over it. We boys, too, magnified the damage and discussed ingenious plans for exterminating them. But after all, I do not believe that we really got two hundred weight of hay less in the field, in consequence of wood-chucks; and certainly the clover as it stood was not worth sixty cents a hundred. A dollar and twenty cents would probably have made good the entire loss; and I suspect that one-half of the damage from trampling on the clover was done by us boys, in pursuit of the chucks, rather than by the chucks themselves. At least, I still remember running through the grass in a very reckless manner on several occasions.

I am keenly aware that to write anything in defense of the wood-chuck will prove unpopular with farmers and farmers' boys. Still, I venture to ask whether we are not, perhaps, a little too much inclined to deem the earth and everything that grows out of it our own particular property. The wood-chuck is undoubtedly an older resident on this continent than men, certainly a far older resident than white men, who came here less than three hundred years ago. Moreover, he is a quiet, inoffensive resident, never becomes a pauper, never gets intoxicated, nor creates any disturbance, minds his own business, and only "whistles" when astonished or suddenly attacked by man and his dogs. May it not be possible

that he is honestly entitled to a few stalks of clover which grow in the country which he and his ancestors had inhabited for centuries before white men knew there was any such place as America?

The writer now owns a farm in Maine, or at least holds a deed of it, given him, for a consideration, by another man who in turn had bought it of a previous incumbent who had seized it from the Indians, wood-chucks, hares, foxes and other original proprietors, without, as I hear, making them any return whatever; who, in fact, ejected them without ceremony. For some years whenever the wood-chucks ate anything that grew on the land, particularly if it were anything which I had sown or planted, I attacked them with guns, traps and dogs and killed them when I could.

But one day it occurred to me that perhaps my deed did not fairly authorize me to behave in just that way towards them, and that I was playing the rôle of a small, but very cruel, self-conceited tyrant over a conquered species whose blood cried out against me from the ground. I ceased my persecutions and massacres. Twenty or thirty wood-chucks now live on the premises with me, unmolested, for the most part. They take about what they want and dig a hole whenever they want a new one. They are really very peaceable neighbors, and it is rarely that we have a difference of opinion in the matter of garden truck, — for I still draw the line at early pease and beans in the garden.

It is, indeed, quite surprising how little they take, or destroy. I do not believe that in all that time they have done me damages which any two fair-minded referees would allow me five dollars for. I am sure I spent more than that for ammunition, to say nothing of time, traps, dog-food, etc., during the year or two that I was playing the despot and trying to exterminate them. Now that I have rid my mind of the barbarous propensity to kill them, I really enjoy

seeing them sitting up by their holes, or peeping at me over the heads of clover.

But a boy naturally likes to use his trap and his gun, especially on any animal, or bird, which his seniors represent to him as an outlaw. When the Old Squire set a bounty of five cents upon wood-chuck scalps, the desire to go on the war-path against the proscribed rodents at once took possession of us. A number of rusty fox-traps and mink-traps were brought forth from the wagon-house chamber, to be set at the entrances of the wood-chucks' holes. We covered the trenchers of the traps carefully over with loose dirt and attached the chain to stakes, driven into the ground a little to one side of the hole. In this way five chucks were trapped in the south field during the week.

Halstead and I were in partnership trapping them, but Addison preferred to rely on the gun. It is next to impossible to kill a wood-chuck with shot so quickly that he will not, after being hit, succeed in running into his hole, and thus defeat the evidence that he is a dead wood-chuck. Addison, however, hit upon a stratagem for shooting them at short range. He could imitate their peculiar " whistle " quite cleverly, and having observed that when one wood-chuck whistles, all the others within hearing are apt to exhibit some little curiosity as to what is going on, he turned the circumstance to account. Going cautiously to a burrow, he would crouch down, and placing the muzzle of the gun so as to shoot into the hole, " whistle," as if some neighboring chuck had come along to prospect the premises. In almost every instance, when there was a chuck in the hole, it would immediately come up in sight, probably to greet, or repel its visitor. The instant it appeared, Addison would fire and nearly always kill the animal; for although often he could not secure it, he would carefully close up the hole with stones and earth, and if,

after three days, the chuck did not dig out past the obstruction, he laid claim to the bounty. A roster, which he kept in notches on the garden gate, showed that he had shot fourteen wood-chucks.

I remember that Theodora had something to say several times about our cruelty to the poor creatures; but we justified it on account of the damage which the wood-chucks were alleged to do to the grain, grass and beans.

"Oh, Doad would let the wood-chucks eat up everything we plant!" Halse would say, sarcastically. "'Let them have it,' she would say. 'Don't hurt the poor little things!' That's just like girls. They don't have to plant and hoe, so they are very merciful and tender-hearted. But if they had to plough and work and plant and sow and hoe in the hot sun all day, to raise a crop, they'd sing a different tune when the plaguey wood-chucks came around and ate it up!"

We thought Addison's stratagem a very bright one. That he could "whistle" the chuck out of his hole, and fetch him up to the very muzzle of the gun, was considered remarkably clever. But an incident which occurred a few days later rendered it forever unpopular.

Catherine Edwards had come over to go raspberrying, and Theodora, Ellen and Wealthy set off with her after school for the south field. They had to go around the clover piece, and as they passed it, Kate espied a wood-chuck, which, when it heard them, instead of disappearing in its burrow hard by, ran around in so peculiar a manner that they all stopped to watch it.

"It's crazy," cried Catherine; and at first they were afraid the animal would attack them; it ran to and fro in what seemed an aimless sort of manner. At length, they concluded that it had lost its hole and was trying to find it. They saw that its head was bare of hair in front, and presently decided that the

poor creature was blind, for its eyes appeared to be gone, or covered over with an incrustation.

The explanation of its singular appearance and behavior then suddenly occurred to Ellen. "I know!" she cried. "It's one of those wood-chucks that Ad has shot in the face and eyes, as they peep out of their holes when he 'whistles' to them!"

"Oh, the poor, abused thing!" exclaimed Catherine. "I never heard of anything so hatefully cruel!"

The wood-chuck, although so dreadfully wounded and with its eyes destroyed by the powder, had yet, after several days, mustered sufficient strength to come out and feed. But it was totally blind, and once having lost its course, could not find the way back to its burrow, but dashed about in terror amidst the clover. Finally it took refuge beneath some of the lodged grass beside a stone; and meantime those sympathetic girls held an indignation meeting. Their pity for the poor creature knew no bounds, and Ellen was despatched to call us boys to the spot, that the full enormity of our act might be exhibited before our eyes.

We were just finishing hoeing the corn, the second time, that afternoon, and had only a few rows more. With an air of one who has a mission and a duty to perform, Ellen approached where we were at work and said, "We want you to come down to the south field this minute!"

"What for?" asked Addison.

"A good reason," replied Ellen, with an accent of suppressed scorn. "Kate and Doad sent me."

"What is it?" persisted Addison.

"Some of your fine works," said Ellen. "And you just come straight along and see it."

"We won't go unless you tell," replied Halse.

"Oh, you won't!" exclaimed Ellen severely. "Great wood-chuck hunters you are!"

At the word *wood-chuck* we began to feel interested, and at length so far obeyed Ellen's iterated summons as to follow after her to the south field.

"Well, what's wanted?" demanded Addison, addressing himself to Theodora, as we drew near.

"I want you to see just what a cruel boy you are!" she replied. "There's one of the wood-chucks that you pretend to shoot so cutely. Go look at him, right under the clover there by that stone. Look at his poor little eyes all burned out, you cruel fellow!"

Not a little dumbfounded by this blast of indignation, thus suddenly let loose upon us, we drew near and examined the crouching chuck. It was really a rueful spectacle, — the disabled and trembling creature trying in vain to see where its enemies were gathered about it.

"I didn't think you were such a cruel boy!" exclaimed Catherine, sarcastically. "Alf Batchelder might do such a thing. He is hateful enough always. But I didn't think it of you."

"Well, I shot at him," exclaimed Addison. "I thought I had killed him, you know."

"Oh yes, you did think, did you!" cried Catherine. "How would you like to have some one come along to your door or your chamber window, and speak to you to come out; and then when you stepped to the door to see what was wanted, to have them fire powder in your face and burn your eyes out! How would you like that?"

"I don't think I would like it," replied Addison, laughing.

"Now I wouldn't laugh," said Theodora, whose feelings, indeed, had been wrought upon to the point of tears as she watched the blinded creature. "You ought not to have such a hard heart. I didn't think you had, once," she added reproachfully.

"Oh, he is just like all the rest of the boys," exclaimed Kate.

"No, he isn't," said Theodora, wiping her eyes.

"They are all alike," persisted Kate. "Always killing and torturing something."

"And all the girls are little saints," mimicked Halse.

"Oh, I'm not speaking to you!" cried Kate. "You're the Alf Batchelder sort. But I'm ashamed of Addison, to treat any creature in that way!"

In short, those girls read us a dreadful lecture; they berated us hot and heavy. If we attempted to reply and defend ourselves, they only lashed us the harder.

"Well, well," said Addison at length, picking up a club. "I'll put the creature out of its misery, so that at least it will not be caught and worried by dogs."

"You sha'n't! You sha'n't kill the poor thing!" cried Ellen; and then finding that Addison was about to do so, they all turned and ran away, without looking back.

Halstead was inclined to make light of the matter, and ridiculed the girls, but Addison did not say much about it. I think he felt conscience-smitten, and I never knew him to attempt to shoot a wood-chuck in that way afterwards.

CHAPTER XVII

HAYING TIME

IT was the custom at the Old Squire's to begin "haying" on Monday after the Fourth of July.

What hot and sweaty memories are linked with that word, *haying!*

But haying in and of itself is a clean and pleasant kind of farm work, if only the farmers would not rush it so relentlessly. As soon as haying begins, a demon of haste to finish in a given number of days seems, or once seemed, to take possession of the American farmer. Thunder showers goad him on; the fact that he has to pay two or even three dollars per day for his hired help stimulates him to even greater exertions; and the net result is, that haying time every year is a fiery ordeal from which the husbandman and his boys emerge sunburnt, brown as bacon scraps and lean as the camels of Sahara, often with blood perniciously altered from excessive perspiration and too copious water drinking. An erroneous idea has prevailed that "sweating" is good for a man. Sometimes it is good, in case of colds or fevers. While unduly exerting himself beneath a scorching sun, the farmer would no doubt perish if he did not perspire. None the less, such copious sudation is an evil that wastefully saps vitality. Few farmers go through twenty haying seasons without practically breaking down.

The hired man, too, has come to know that haying is the hardest work of the year and demands nearly double the wages that he expected to receive for

hoeing potatoes — far more disagreeable work — the week before.

As a result of many inquiries, I learn that farmers' boys dread haying most of all farm work, chiefly on account of the long hours, the hurry beneath the fervid July sun, and the heat of the close lofts and mows where they have to stow away the hay. How many a lad, half-suffocated by hay in these same hot mows and lofts, has made the resolve then and there never to be a farmer — and kept it!

Is it not a serious mistake to harvest the hay crop on the hurry-and-rush principle? Why not take a little more time for it? It is better to let a load of hay get wet than drive one's self and one's helpers to the brink of sunstroke. It is better to begin a week earlier than try to do two weeks' work in one. A day's work in haying should and can be so planned as to give two hours' nooning in the hottest part of the day.

Gramp was an old-fashioned farmer, but he had seen the folly of undue haste exemplified too many times not to have changed his earlier methods of work considerably; so much so, that he now enjoyed the reputation of being an "easy man to work for." For several years he had employed the same help.

On this bright Monday morning of July, the hayfields smiled, luxuriant, blooming with clover, herdsgrass, buttercup, daisy and timothy. There was the house field, the west field, the south field, the middle field and the east field, besides the young orchard, the old orchard, the Aunt Hannah lot and the Aunt Hannah meadow, which was left till the last, sixty-five acres or more, altogether. What an expanse it looked to me! It was my first experience, but Addison and Halse had forewarned me that we would have it hot in haying. I had already grown a little inured to the sun during June, however; and in point of fact, I never afterwards suffered so much from the sun rays

as during those first attempts to hoe corn at the old farm in June.

One of the hired men was no less a personage than Elder Witham, who preached at the Chapel every second week, and who, like the great apostle of the Gentiles, was not above working with his hands, to piece out his small salary. He came Sunday evening, and I did not suppose that he had come to work with us till the next morning, when, after prayers, he quietly fetched his scythe and snath down from the wagon-house chamber, and called on Halstead to turn the grindstone for him. I then learned that he had worked at haying for us three summers. The Elder was fifty years old or more, and, though well-tanned, had yet a semi-clerical appearance. He was austere in religious matters, and the hired men were very careful what they said before him.

The other two men, who came after breakfast, were brothers, named James and Asa Doane, or Jim and Ase, as they were familiarly addressed.

I was reckoned too young to mow with a scythe, though Halse and Addison mowed for an hour or two in the forenoon. I had plenty to do, however, raking, spreading, and stowing the hay in the barn.

In haying time we boys were called at half-past four o'clock every morning, with the hired men. It was our business to milk and do the barn chores before breakfast. Often, too, there would be a load of hay, drawn in the previous evening, to stow away, in addition to the chores.

Mowing machines and horse-rakes had not then come into general use. All the mowing was done with scythes, and the raking with hand rakes and "loafer" rakes. Generally, all hands would be busy for three hours every bright afternoon, raking the grass which had been cut down in the forenoon. The Old Squire and the Elder commonly raked side by side, and often fell into argument on the subject of man's

free moral agency, on which they held somewhat diverse views. Upon the second afternoon, Asa Doane maneuvered to get them both into a yellow-backed bumble-bees' nest, which was under an old stump in the hay.

The Elder was just saying, "I tell you, Squire, man was designed for —" when a yellow-back stung him on his neck, and he finished his sentence with a rather funny exclamation! Another insect punched Gramp at almost the same moment, and they had a lively time of it, brandishing their rakes, and throwing the hay about. The others raked on, laughing inwardly without seeming to notice their trouble.

But that night after supper, while we were grinding scythes, the Elder called Gramp out behind the barn, and I overheard him very gravely ask, in an undertone, "Squire, when we were amongst those bumble-bees, this afternoon, I hope I didn't say anything unbecoming a minister. I was a reckless young man once, Squire; and even now, when anything comes acrost me sudden, like those bumble-bees, the old words are a-dancing at my tongue's end before I know they are there.

"Because, if I did make a mistake," he continued, "I want to make public confession of it before these young men."

But the Squire had been too busy with his own bumble-bees to remember. So the matter passed, by default of evidence; but the Elder felt uneasy about it, and watched our faces pretty sharply for a day or two.

The heat troubled me not a little, and I then knew no better than to drink inordinately of cold water. I would drink every five minutes when I could get where there was water, even after the Old Squire had pointed out to me the ill effects that follow such indulgence. But it seemed to me that I must drink, and the more I drank the more I wanted, till by Fri-

day of that first week I was taken ill. Sharp pain is a severe yet often useful teacher. I was obliged to desist from frequent potations, and Gram gave me some bits of snake-root to hold in my mouth and chew.

Both the Doanes were great jokers. There was something in the way of fun going on, nearly all the time; either there was racing, while mowing, or raking the heels of the boys ahead of them. They were brimming over with hay-makers' tricks, and I well remember what a prank they played on me during the second week.

It befell while we were getting the south field, which was mostly in clover that summer. We drew in the hay with both oxen and horses. When the former were employed, they were yoked to a "rack," set midway on the axle of two large wheels. The rack would carry a ton or more of hay. During the first week, they had several times set me to tread down the hay in the rack, but I made a very bad job of loading it; for I did not know how to "lay the corners" of the load.

At length one afternoon, the Old Squire, observing my faults, climbed on the cart, and taking the fork, showed me patiently how to begin at first, and how to lay the hay out at the sides and ends of the rack, keeping the ends higher than the middle all the way up. He made it so plain to me that I took a liking to that part of the work. I could not of course handle the hay as well as a man, but I contrived to stow it quite well, for I had grasped the principle of loading and managed to lay a fairly presentable load. As a result I grew a little over-confident, and was inclined to boast of my skill and make somewhat rash statements as to the size of loads which I could lay. The others probably saw that I needed discipline. I must have been dull, or I should have been on my guard for set-backs from Halse, Addison, or the mischie-

vous Doanes. When a boy's head begins to grow large and his self-conceit to sprout, he is sometimes singularly blind to consequences.

But to proceed, we had thirty-one "tumbles" of dry clover to get in after supper that day, from the south field. The Elder and the Old Squire did not go out with us.

"You will have to make two loads of it," the latter remarked as we set off. "Put it in the 'west barn.' You need not hurry. The Elder and I will grind the scythes to-night."

I climbed into the rack and rode out to the field, Asa driving and Addison coming on behind, to rake after the cart. Jim and Halstead had gone on ahead, to rick up the hay.

"Two loads, wal, they won't be very large ones," Asa remarked.

"What's the use to go twice?" I said. "I can load that hay all on at once."

Asa looked round at me, as I afterwards remembered, in a somewhat peculiar manner, and I now imagine that both he and Addison at once began plotting my abasement, and passed the "wink" to the others.

"You couldn't do it," said Asa.

I studied the amount of hay on the ground carefully for a moment or two, reflected on the number of "tumbles" I had previously loaded, and then foolishly offered to bet that, if they would pitch it slowly, I could stow every straw of it on the rack at one load and ride the load into the barn. I had forgotten that our orders were to put the hay in the west barn, and that the great doors of that barn were not as large as those of the south barn, the top-piece over them being but twelve feet high. I did not once think of that!

The others saw the trap which I was setting for myself, but kept quiet and laid wagers against me.

The more they wagered, the more eager I became to try it, if they would not hurry me.

Asa began slowly pitching on the hay to me. I laid the load broad and long, and without any very great difficulty stowed the thirty-one "tumbles." It was a large load but a shapely one. I was not a little elated, and chaffed the Doanes considerably. They kept ominously quiet.

We started for the barn, I riding in triumph on the load, and I did not see the danger before me till we were close to the great doors. Asa did not stop.

"Haw, Buck! Huh, Line, up there!" he shouted, and drove fast. The top-piece over the doors struck the load fully three feet down from the top, scraping off about half a ton of hay and myself along with it. I landed on the ground behind the cart outside of the doors, with all that hay over me! The rest of the load went in, amidst shouts of laughter from the others.

I lay still under the hay, to hear what they would say. Then they all came around and began to call to me. I kept quiet. Finding that I did not move nor answer, they grew alarmed. The Old Squire and Elder were seen coming. "Boys," says Asa, "I dunno but it's broke his neck!" With that he and Jim seized their forks and began to dig for me so vigorously that I was glad to shout, to keep from being impaled on the fork-tines.

I crept out and rose to my feet a good deal rumpled, bareheaded and shamefaced.

The Doanes, Addison and Halse had been so frightened that they did not now laugh much. The Elder looked at me with a curious expression; and the Old Squire, who had begun to say something pretty sharp to Asa and James (who certainly deserved a reprimand), regarded me at first with some anxiety, which, however, rapidly gave place to a grim smile.

"Well, well, my son," said he, "you must live and learn."

One afternoon later in the month, while we were getting the hay in the Aunt Hannah meadow, a somewhat exciting incident occurred. Asa was pitching on a load of the meadow hay and I loading, for I still kept my liking for that part of the work and was allowed to do it, although it was in reality too hard for me. The Old Squire was raking after the cart, and the others were raking hay into windrows a little way off. As we were putting on the last "tumble," or the last but one, a peculiar kind of large fly, or bee, of which cattle are strangely afraid, came buzzing about old Line, the off ox. The instant the ox heard that bee, he snorted, uttered a bellow and started to run. The very sound of the bee's hum seemed to render the oxen quite frantic. Almost at the outset they ran the offwheel over a rick of logs, nearly throwing me headlong from the load. I thrust my fork down deep and held to that, and away went the load down the meadow, both oxen going at full speed, with Asa vainly endeavoring to outrun them, and Gramp shouting, "Whoa-hish!" at the top of his voice. We went on over stumps and through water-holes, while the rest ran across lots, to head off the runaways. At one time I was tumbling in the hay, then jounced high above it; and such a whooping and shouting as rose on all sides had never before disturbed that peaceful meadow, at least within historic times.

Coming to a place where the brook made a broad bend partly across the meadow, the oxen rushed blindly off the turfy bank, and landed, load and all, in two or three feet of water and mud. When the load struck in the brook, I went off, heels over head, and fell on the nigh ox's back. The oxen were mired, and so was the load. We were obliged to get the horses to haul the cattle out, and both the oxen and

horses were required to haul out the cart. Altogether, it was a very muddy episode; and though rather startling while it lasted, we yet laughed a great deal over it afterwards.

CHAPTER XVIII

APPLE - HOARDS

WE heard a great deal concerning "Reconstruction" of the Union that summer. The Old Squire was painfully concerned about it; he feared that Congress had made mistakes which would nullify the results gained by the Civil War. The low character of the men, sent to the South to administer the government, revolted him. He used to bring his newspaper to the table nearly every meal and would sometimes fling it down indignantly, crying, "Wrong! wrong! all wrong!" Then he and Addison would discuss current politics, while the rest of us listened, Theodora gravely, Halstead scoffing, and I often very absently, for as a boy I had other more trivial interests chiefly in mind. I recall that the old gentleman used frequently to exclaim, "You boys must begin to read the Constitution. Next after the Bible, the Constitution ought to be read in every family in our land."

I have to confess that at this particular time I was much less interested in the Constitution than in the luscious fall apples out in the orchard, and the rivalry to secure them.

"Have you got a hoard?" was the question which, at about this time, began to be whispered among us.

At first the query was a novelty to me; my thoughts went back to a story which I had once read concerning a horde of robbers on the steppes of Central Asia. In this case, however, the thing referred to was a hoard of early apples. I had gone to the Edwardses on some domestic errand; it was directly after break-

fast, and Thomas, who was putting a new tooth in the "loafer rake," had set a fine, mellow "winesap," from which he had taken a bite, on the shed sill beside him. "Got a pile of those fellows in my hoard," he remarked, with a boastful wink. "Have you got a hoard down at your house?"

"Tom is always bragging about his hoard," said Catherine, who had come to the kitchen door, to hear any news which I might have to impart. "He thinks nobody can have a hoard but himself."

"She's got one," Tom whispered to me, as Catherine turned away. "She's awful sly about it, for fear I'll find it, and I think I know where it is. I'll bet she has gone to it now," he added, taking another bite; and jumping up, he peeped into the kitchen. "She *has,*" he whispered to me. "Come on, *still;* don't say a word and we will catch her."

I remember feeling a certain faint sense of repugnance to engaging in a hunt for Catherine's apple preserve; but I followed Tom around the wood-shed, past a corn-crib, and then around to the north side of the barn.

"Now sneak along beside the stone wall here," said Tom. "Keep down. Don't get in sight."

We crawled along in cover of the stone wall and came down opposite the garden and orchard. Tom then peeped stealthily over.

"There she is!" he whispered, "right out there by the Isabella grape trellis; keep still now, she's going back to the house. We'll find her hoard."

We searched about the grape trellis and over the entire garden for ten minutes or more, but found no secret preserve of apples.

As we returned to the wood-shed, Kate came out, smiling disdainfully.

"Found it?" she asked us, — a question which I felt to be an embarrassing one. With an air of triumph, she then displayed a fine yellow Sweet Harvey.

"Oh, don't you think you are cunning?" muttered Tom. "But I'll find your hoard all the same."

"Let me know when you do," replied Kate, with a provoking laugh.

"Oh, you'll know when I find it," said Tom. "I'll take what there is in it. That was all a blind — her going out to the grape-vine," he remarked to me, as Kate turned away about her work. "She went down there on purpose to fool us, and get us to hunt there for nothing."

I went home quite fully informed in regard to the ethics of apple-hoards. The code was simple; it consisted in keeping one's own hoard undiscovered, and in finding and robbing those of others.

"Have you got an apple-hoard?" I asked Addison, as soon as I reached home.

For all reply, he winked his left eye to me.

"Doad's got one, too," he said, after I had had time to comprehend his stealth.

"You didn't tell me," I remarked.

Addison laughed. "That would be great strategy!" he observed, derisively, "to tell of it! But I only made mine day before yesterday. I thought the early apples were beginning to get good enough to have a hoard. I want to get a big stock on hand for September town-meeting," he added. "I mean to carry a bushel or two, and peddle them out for a cent apiece. The Old Squire put me up to that last year, and I made two dollars and ninety cents. That's better than nothing."

"Are you really contented here? Are you homesick, ever?" I asked him.

"Well," replied Ad, judicially, after weighing my question a little, "it isn't, of course, as it would have been with me if it had not been for the War, and father had lived. I should be at school now and getting ahead fast. But it is of no use to think of that; father and mother are both in their graves,

and here I am, same as you and Doad are. We have got to make our way along somehow and get what education we can. It is of no use to be discontented. We are lucky to have so good a place to go to. I like here pretty well, for I like to be in the country better, on the whole, than in the city. Things are sort of good and solid here. The only drawback is that there isn't much chance to go to school; but after this year, I hope to go to the Academy, down at the village, ten or twelve weeks every season."

"Then you mean to try to get an education?" I asked, for it looked to me to be a vast undertaking.

"I do," replied Addison, hopefully. "Father meant for me to go to college, and I mean to go, even if I get to be twenty before I am fitted to enter. I will not grow up an ignoramus. A man without education is a nobody nowadays. But with a good education, a man can do almost anything."

"Halse doesn't talk that way," said I.

"I presume to say he doesn't," replied Addison. "He and I do not think alike."

"But Theodora says that she means to go to school and study a great deal, so as to do something which she has in mind, one of these days," I went on to say. "Do you know what it is?"

"Cannot say that I do," Addison replied, rather indifferently, as I thought.

"Oh, I suppose it is a good thing for girls to study and get educated," Addison continued. "But I do not think it amounts to so much for them as it does for boys."

This, indeed, was an opinion far more common in 1866 than at the present time.

"Perhaps it is to be a teacher?" I conjectured.

"Maybe," said Addison.

But I was thinking of apple-hoards. There was a delightful proprietary sense in the idea of owning

one. It stimulated some latent propensity to secretiveness, as also the inclination to play the freebooter in a small way.

This was the first time that I had ever had access to an orchard of ripening fruit, and those "early trees" are well fixed in my youthful recollections. Several of them stood immediately below the garden, along the upper side of the orchard. First there was the "August Pippin" tree, a great crotched tree, with a trunk as large round as a barrel. Somehow such trees do not grow nowadays.

The August Pippins began to ripen early in August. These apples were as large as a teacup, bright canary yellow in color, mellow, a trifle tart, and wonderfully fragrant. When the wind was right, I could smell those pippins over in the corn-field, fifty rods distant from the orchard. I even used to think that I could tell by the smell when an apple had dropped off from the tree!

Then there were the "August Sweets," which grew on four grafts, set into an old "drying apple" tree. They were pale yellow apples, larger even than the August Pippins, sweet, juicy and mellow. The old people called them "Pear Sweets."

Next were the "Sour Harvey," the "Sweet Harvey," and the "Mealy Sweet" trees. The "Mealy Sweet" was not of much account; it was too dry, but the Harveys were excellent. Some of the Sweet Harveys were almost as sweet as honey; at least, I thought so then.

Then there were the "Noyes Apple" and the "Hobbs Apple." The Noyes was a deep-red, pleasant-sour apple, which ripened in the latter part of August; the Hobbs was striped red and green, flattened in shape, but of a fine, spicy flavor.

The "sops-in-wines," as, I believe, the fruit men term them, but which we called "wine-saps," were a pleasant-flavored apple, scarcely sweet, yet hardly

sour. A little later came the "Porters" and "Sweet Greenings," also the "Nodheads" and the "Minute Apples," the "Georgianas" and the "Gravensteins," and so on until the winter apples, the principal product of the orchard, were reached.

We began eating those early apples by the first of August, in spite of all the terrible stories of colic which Gram told, in order to dissuade us from making ourselves ill. As the Pippins and August Sweets began to get mellow and palatable, we rivalled each other in the haste with which we tumbled out of doors early in the morning, so as to capture, each for himself or herself, the apples which had dropped from the trees overnight. Every one of us soon had a private hoard in which to secrete those apples which we did not eat at the time. There were numerous contests in rapid dressing and in reckless racing downstairs and out into the orchard.

Little Wealthy, on account of her youth, was, to some degree, exempted from this ruthless looting. We all knew where her hoard was, but spared it for a long time. She believed that she had placed it in a wonderfully secret place, and because none of us seemed to discover it, she boasted so much that Ellen and I plundered it one morning, before she was awake, to give her a wholesome lesson in humility.

A little later, just before the breakfast hour, Wealthy stole out to her preserve — to find it empty. I never saw a child more mortified. She felt so badly that she could scarcely eat breakfast, and her lip kept quivering. The others laughed at her, and soon she left the table, and no doubt shed tears in secret over her loss.

After breakfast Ellen and I sought her out, and offered to give back the apples that we had taken. The child was too proud, however, to obtain them in such a way, and refused to touch one of them.

No such clemency as had been shown to Wealthy

THE EARLY APPLES.

was practised by any one toward the others; no quarter was given or taken in the matter of robbing hoards. For a month this looting went on, and was a great contest of wits.

Theodora's was the only hoard that escaped detection during the entire summer and autumn. She had her apples hidden in an empty bee-hive, which stood out in the garden under the "bee-shed" about midway in the row of thirteen hives. The most of us were a little afraid of the bees, but Theodora was one of those persons whom bees seem never to sting. She was accustomed to care for them, and thus to be about the hives a great deal. Not one of us happened to think of that empty bee-hive. The shed and some lilac shrubs concealed the place from the house; and Doad went unsuspected to and from the hive, which she kept filled with apples. We spent hours in searching for her hoard, but did not learn where she had concealed it until she told us herself, two years afterwards.

Ellen had the worst fortune of us all. We found her hoard regularly every few days. At first she hid it in the wagon-house, then up garret, and afterward in the wood-shed; but no sooner would she accumulate a little stock of apples than some one of us, who had spied on her goings and comings, would rob her. Even Wealthy found Nell's hoard once, and robbed it of nearly a half-bushel of apples. Nell always bore her losses good-naturedly, and obtained satisfaction occasionally by plundering Halse and me.

I remember that my first hoard was placed in the very high, thick "double" wall of the orchard. I loosened and removed a stone from the orchard side of the wall, and then took out the small inside stones from behind it until I had made a cavity sufficient to hold nearly a bushel. Into this cavity I put my apples, and then fitted the outer stone back into its place, thus making the wall look as if it had not been

disturbed. This device protected my apples for nearly a fortnight; but at length Ellen, who was on my track, observed me disappear suspiciously behind the wall one day, and an hour or two later took occasion to reconnoiter the place where I had disappeared.

She passed the hidden cavity several times, and would not have discovered it, if she had not happened to smell the mellow August Pippins of my hoard. Guided by the fragrance which they emitted, she examined the wall more closely, and finally found the loose stone. When I went to my preserve, after we had milked the cows that evening, I found only the empty hole in the wall.

I next essayed to conceal my hoard in the ground. In the side of a knoll, screened from the house by the orchard wall and a thick nursery of little apple trees, I secretly dug a hole which I lined with new cedar shingles. For a lid to the orifice leading into it, I fitted a sod. A little wild gooseberry bush overhung the spot, and I fancied that I had my apples safely hidden.

But never was self-confidence worse misplaced! It was a cloudy, wet afternoon in which I had thus employed myself. Halse had gone fishing; but Addison chanced to be up garret, reading over a pile of old magazines, as was his habit on wet days. From the attic window he espied the top of my straw hat bobbing up and down beyond the wall, and as he read, he marked my operations.

With cool, calculating shrewdness he remained quiet for three or four days, till I had my new hoard well stocked with "Sweet Harveys," then made a descent upon it and cleared it out. Next morning, when, with great stealth and caution, I had stolen to the place, I found my miniature cavern empty except for a bit of paper, on which, with a lead-pencil, had been hastily inscribed the following tantalizing bit of doggerel:

"He hid his hoard in the ground
And thought it couldn't be found;
But forgot, as indeed he should not,
That the attic window overlooked the spot."

For about three minutes I felt very angry, then I managed to summon a grin, along with a resolve to get even with Addison — for I recognized his handwriting — by plundering his hoard, if by any amount of searching it were possible to find it. Addison was supposed to have the best and biggest hoard of all, and thus far none of us had got even an inkling as to where it was hidden.

I watched him as a cat might watch a mouse for two days, and made pretty sure that he did not go to his hoard in the daytime. Then I bethought myself that he always had a pocketful of apples every morning, and concluded that he must visit his preserve sometime "between days," most likely directly after he appeared to retire to his room at night.

So on the following night I lay awake and listened. After about half an hour of silence, I heard the door of his room open softly. With equal softness I stole out, and followed Addison through the open chamber of the ell, down a flight of stairs into the wagon-house, and then down another flight into the carriage-house cellar.

He had a lamp in his hand. When he entered the cellar the door closed after him, so that I did not dare go farther. I went back into the chamber, concealing myself, and waited to observe his return. He soon made his appearance, eating an apple; there was a smile on his face, and his pockets were protuberant.

Next day I proceeded to search the wagon-house cellar, but for some time my search was in vain.

There was in the cellar a large box-stove, into which I had often looked, but had seen only a mass of old brown paper and corn-husks. On this day

I went to the stove and pulled out the rubbish, when lo! in the farther end I saw three salt boxes, all full of Pippins and August Sweetings.

I was not long in emptying those boxes, but I wanted to leave in the place of the apples a particularly exasperating bit of rhyme. I studied and rhymed all that forenoon, and at last, with much mental travail, I got out the following skit, which I left in the topmost box:

> "He was a cunning cove
> Who hid his hoard in the stove;
> And he was so awful bright
> That he went to it only by night.
> But there was still another fellow
> Whose head was not always on his pillow."

I knew by the sickly grin on Ad's face when we went out to milk the cows next morning that my first effort at poetry had nauseated him; he could not hold his head up all day, to look me in the face, without the same, sheepish, sick look.

Where to put my next hoard was a question over which I pondered long. I tried the hay-mow and several old sleighs set away for the summer, but Addison was now on my trail and speedily relieved me of my savings.

There were many obstacles to the successful concealment of apples. If I were to choose an unfrequented spot, the others, who were always on the lookout, would be sure to spy out my goings to and fro. It was necessary, I found, that the hoard should be placed where I could visit it as I went about my ordinary business, without exciting suspicion.

We had often to go into the granary after oats and meal, and the place that I at last hit on was a large bin of oats. I put my apples in a bag, and buried them to a depth of over two feet in the oats in one corner of the bin. I knew that Addison and Halse would look among the oats, but I did not be-

lieve that they would dig deeply enough to find the apples, and my confidence was justified.

It was a considerable task to get at my hoard to put apples into it, or to get them out; but the sense of exultation which I felt, as days and weeks passed and my hoard remained safe, amply repaid me. I was particularly pleased when I saw from the appearance of the oats that they had been repeatedly dug over.

As I had to go to the granary every night and morning for corn, or oats, I had an opportunity to visit my store without roundabout journeys or suspicious trips, which my numerous and vigilant enemies would have been certain to note.

The hay-mow was Halse's hoarding-place throughout the season, and although I was never but once able to find his preserve, Addison could always discover it whenever he deemed it worth while to make the search.

To ensure fair play with the early apples, the Old Squire had made a rule that none of us should shake the trees, or knock off apples with poles or clubs. So we all had equal chances to secure those apples which fell off, and the prospect of finding them beneath the trees was a great premium on early rising in the months of August and September.

I will go on in advance of my story proper to relate a queer incident which happened in connection with those early apples and our rivalry to get them, the following year. The August Sweeting tree stood apart from the other trees, near the wall between the orchard and the field, so that fully half of the apples that dropped from it fell into the field instead of into the orchard.

We began to notice early in August that no apples seemed to drop off in the night on the field side of the wall.

For a long time every one of us supposed that

some of the others had got out ahead of the rest and picked them up. But one morning Addison mentioned the circumstance at the breakfast table, as being rather singular; and when we came to compare notes, it transpired that none of us had been getting any apples, mornings, on the field side of the wall.

"Somebody's hooking those apples, then!" exclaimed Addison. "Now who can it be?" For we all knew that a good many apples must fall into the field.

"I'll bet it's Alf Batchelder!" Halse exclaimed. But it did not seem likely that Alfred would come a mile, in the night, to "hook" a few August Sweets, when he had plenty of apples at home.

Nor could we think of any one among our young neighbors who would be likely to come constantly to take the apples, although any one of them in passing might help himself, for fall apples were regarded much as common property in our neighborhood.

Yet every morning, while there would be a peck or more of Sweetings on the orchard side of the wall, scarcely an apple would be found in the field.

Addison confessed that he could not understand the matter; Theodora also thought it a very mysterious thing. The oddity of the circumstance seemed to make a great impression on her mind. At last she declared that she was determined to know what became of those Sweets, and asked me to sit up with her one night and watch, as she thought it would be too dark and lonesome an undertaking to watch alone.

I agreed to get up at two o'clock on the following morning, if she would call me, for we wisely concluded that the pilferer came early in the morning, rather than early in the night, else many apples would have fallen off into the field after his visit, and have been found by us in our early visits.

I did not half believe that Theodora would wake

in time to carry out our plan, but at half-past two she knocked softly at the door of my room. I hastily dressed, and each of us put on an old Army overcoat, for the morning was foggy and chilly. It was still very dark. We went out into the garden, felt our way along to a point near the August Sweeting tree, and sat down on two old squash-bug boxes under the trellis of a Concord grape-vine, which made a thick shelter and a complete hiding-place.

For a mortal long while we sat there and watched and listened in silence, not wishing to talk, lest the rogue whom we were trying to surprise should overhear us. At intervals Theodora gave me a pinch, to make sure that I was not asleep. An hour passed, but it was still dark when suddenly we heard, on the other side of the wall, a slight noise resembling the sound of footsteps.

Instantly Doad shook my arm. "Sh!" she breathed. "Some one's come! Creep along and peep over."

I stole to the wall, and then, rising, slowly parted the vine leaves, and tried to see what it was there. Presently I discerned one, then another dim object on the ground beyond the wall. They were creeping about, and I could plainly hear them munch the apples.

Then Theodora peeped. "It's two little bears, I believe," she breathed in my ear, with her lightest whisper, yet in considerable excitement. "What shall we do?"

I peeped again. If bears, they were very little ones.

I mustered my courage. As a weapon I had brought an old pitchfork handle. Scrambling suddenly over the wall, I uttered a shout, and the dark objects scudded away across the field, making a great scurry over the stubble of the wheat-field, but they were not very fleet. I came up with one of them after a hundred yards' chase, when it suddenly turned and faced me with a strange loud squeak! Drawing back,

I belabored it with my fork handle until the creature lay helpless, quite dead, in fact.

Theodora came after me in alarm. "Oh, my, you have killed it!" she exclaimed. "What can it be?"

I put my hand cautiously down upon its hair, which was coarser than bristles and sharp-pointed. Turning the body over with the fork handle, I found that it was really heavy.

We could not, in the darkness, even guess what the animal was, and went back to the house much mystified. The Old Squire had just arisen, and we told him the story of our early vigil. "Woodchucks, I guess," was his comment, but we knew that they were not woodchucks. Addison was then called up, to get his opinion, and when told of the animal's exceedingly coarse, sharp-pointed hair, he exclaimed, "I know what it is! It's a hedgehog!"

He bustled around, got on his boots, and went out into the field with me. It was now light, and he had no sooner bent down over it than he pronounced it to be a hedgehog fast enough, or rather a Canada porcupine. Its weight was over thirty pounds, and some of the quills on its back were four or five inches in length, with needle-like, finely barbed points.

The other hedgehog escaped to the woods, and did not again trouble us. The next summer the August Sweetings that fell into the field from the same tree were quite as mysteriously taken at night by a cosset sheep, which for more than a fortnight escaped nightly from the farm-yard, and returned thither of its own accord after it had stolen the apples. Again Theodora and I watched for the pilferer, and captured the cunning creature in the act.

During that first year at the farm, the old folks did not pay much attention to our apple-hoards, but by the time our contests were under way the second season, they, too, caught the contagion of it, from hearing us talk so much about it at the breakfast table.

At first the Old Squire merely dropped some remarks to the effect that, when he was a boy, he could have hidden a hoard where nobody could find it.

"Well, sir, we would like to see you do it!" cried Halse.

The old gentleman did not say at the time that he would, or would not, attempt such an exploit. Moved by Ellen's serio-comic lamentations over her losses, Gram also insinuated that she knew of places in the house in which she could make a hoard that would be hard for us to find; but the girls declared that they would like to see her try to hide a hoard away from them.

Not many days after these conversations had occurred, the Old Squire rather ostentatiously took a very fine August Pippin from his pocket, as we were gathering round the breakfast table, and, after thumbing it approvingly, set it beside his plate, remarking, incidentally, that if one wanted his apples to ripen well, and have just the right flavor, it was necessary that he should place his hoard in some dry, clean, perfectly sweet place.

Of course we were not long in taking so broad a hint as that. Several sly nudges and winks went around the table.

"He's got one!" Addison whispered to me, as Gram poured the coffee, and from that time the Old Squire, in all his goings and comings, was a marked man. He had thrown down a challenge to us, and we were determined to prove that we were as smart as he had been in his youthful days. But for more than a week we were unable to gain the slightest hint as to where his preserve was situated. Meantime Gram had also begun to place a nice August Sweet beside her own plate every morning, as she glanced with a twinkle in her eye over to the Old Squire.

We rummaged everywhere that week, and even forgot to carry on mutual injury and reprisal, in our

desire to humble the pride of our elders. We even bethought ourselves of the words "perfectly sweet," which the old gentleman had used in connection with hoards, and looked in the sugar barrel, but quite in vain. Yet all the while we were daily going by the place where the Old Squire's hoard was concealed; passing so near it that we might have laid hands on it without stepping out of our way, for it was in the wood-house beside the walk which led past the tiered up stove wood into the wagon-house and stable.

Ten or twelve cords of wood, sawed short and split, had been piled loosely into the back part of the wood-house, but in front of this loose pile, and next the plank walk, the wood had been tiered up evenly and closely to a height of ten feet. The Old Squire managed to pull from this tier, at a height of about four feet, a good-sized block, and then, reaching in behind it, had made a considerable cavity. Here he deposited his apples, replacing the block, which fitted to its place in the tier so well that the woodpile appeared as if it had not been disturbed. Shrewdly mindful of the fact that our keen nostrils might smell out his preserve, he cunningly set an old pan with a few refuse pippins in it on a bench close beside the place.

Gram's hoard was hidden, with equal cunning, in the "yarn cupboard," where were kept the woollen balls and yarn hanks, used in darning and knitting, — a small, high cupboard, with a little panel door, set in the wall of the sitting-room next to the fireplace and chimney. The bottom of this cupboard was formed of one broad piece of pine board, which seemed to be nailed down hard and fast; but the old lady, who knew that this board was loose, had raised it and kept her apples in a yarn-ball basket beneath it.

She often had occasion to go to the cupboard to get or replace her knitting, and for a long time none

of the girls suspected her hiding-place. The plain fact was that those girls, as a rule, steered clear of the yarn cupboard, for they none of them very much liked to knit or darn. But at last Ellen happened to go to it one day for a darning-needle, and smelled the apples. Even then she could not discover the hoard, but she went in search of Theodora, who penetrated the secret of the loose bottom board.

They came with great glee to tell us of their discovery, and we were thereby stimulated to renewed efforts to unearth the Old Squire's preserve. The girls promised to say nothing of their discovery for a day or two, and at Ellen's suggestion we agreed that if we could find Gramp's hoard, we would rob both hoarding-places at once and have the laugh on them both at the same time.

We had watched the Old Squire closely, and felt sure that he did not go to his hoard at any time during the day. As he was an early riser, it seemed probable to us that he did his apple-hoarding before we were astir. Addison and I accordingly agreed to get up at three o'clock the following morning and secretly watch all his movements. By a great effort we rose long before light, and dressing, stole out through the wood-house chamber and down the wagon-house stairs into the stable. Here I concealed myself behind an old sleigh, while Addison went back into the wood-house and posted himself on the high tier of wood that fronted on the passageway, lying there in such a posture that he could get a peep of the long walk.

It had hardly begun to grow light, when we heard the old gentleman astir in the kitchen. Presently he came out through the stable and fed the horses, then returned. As he went back through the wood-house, he stopped on the walk beside the high tier of wood on which Addison lay. After listening and looking about him, he removed the block of wood,

took out a fine pippin from his hoard, and carefully replaced the block.

This amused Ad so greatly that he nearly shook the tier of wood down in his efforts to repress laughter, and after the old gentleman had gone into the house, he came tiptoeing out into the stable to tell me, with much elation, what he had seen.

During the forenoon we examined the hoard and told the girls about it. We arranged to rob both the old folks' hoards late that evening, and fill our own with the plunder. To emphasize the exploit, we agreed to take some of the largest apples to the breakfast-table next morning. We fancied that when the old folks saw those apples, and found out where we got them, they would think there were young people living nearly as bright as those of fifty years ago.

Theodora did not really promise that she would assist in the scheme, but she laughed a good deal over it, and seemed to concur with the rest of us.

That evening as soon as the old folks had retired and the house had become quiet, Addison and I cleared out the Old Squire's preserve; and, meantime, Ellen and Theodora had slipped down-stairs into the sitting-room and emptied Gram's hoard in the yarn cupboard. We met out in the garden and divided the spoils; then not liking to trust each other to go directly to our respective hoards, we deposited our shares of the plunder in three different boxes in the wagon-house, and looked forward with no little zest to the fun next morning at the breakfast-table.

But on visiting the boxes next morning, they were all empty! Some one had made a clean sweep. Not an apple was left in them! Addison and I were astounded when we compared notes a few minutes before breakfast. "Who on earth could have done it?" he whispered, after he found out that I was not the traitor.

We hurried to the wood-house and peeped into the

Old Squire's hoarding-place. It was brimful of apples! A light began to dawn upon us. Had the old gentleman watched our performance on the previous evening and outwitted us all? It looked so, for on going in to breakfast, there beside the plates of each of the old folks stood a great nappy dish, heaped full of choice Pippins and Sweets! Addison stole a look around and then dropped his eyes; I did the same, while Ellen looked equally amazed and disconcerted. Theodora, too, remained very quiet.

We concluded that our elders had completely outdone us, and that they were enjoying their victory in a manner intended to convey their ironical appreciation of our small effort to rob them. The more we considered the matter, the more sheepish we felt.

"These are charming good pippins, aren't they, Ruth?" said the old gentleman to Gram.

"Charming," answered she.

Addison gave me a punch under the table, as if to say, "Now they are giving us the laugh."

"And I'm sure we're much obliged for them," the Old Squire continued.

"Indeed, we are obliged," said Gram.

Their remarks seemed to me a little odd, but I didn't look up.

Not another word was spoken at the table, but afterwards Addison and Ellen and I got together in the garden and mutually agreed that we had been badly beaten at our own game.

"They are too old and long-headed for us to meddle with," said Addison. "I cannot even imagine how they did it. I guess we had better let their hoards alone in the future." None the less we could not help thinking that there had been something a little queer about our defeat.

It was nearly two years later before the truth about that night's frolic came to light. Theodora did it. She could not bear to have the old folks beaten and

humiliated by us, for whom they were doing so much. After we had robbed their hoarding-places, she sallied forth again and took all of our shares as well as her own, and then having replenished the looted hoarding-places, she filled the two nappy dishes from her own hoard and set them beside their plates.

The best part of the joke was that the Old Squire and Gram never knew that they had been robbed, and thought only that we had made them a present of some excellent apples. When Theodora saw how chagrined the rest of us were, she kept the whole matter a secret.

CHAPTER XIX

DOG DAYS, GRAIN HARVEST, AND A TRULY LUCRETIAN TEMPEST

AFTER haying came grain harvest. There were three acres of wheat, four of oats, an acre of barley, an acre of buckwheat and an acre and three-fourths of rye to get in. The rye, however, had been harvested during the last week of haying. It ripened early, for it was the Old Squire's custom to sow his rye very early in the spring. The first work which we did on the land, after the snow melted, was to plough and harrow for rye. With the rye we always sowed clover and herdsgrass seed for a hay crop the following year. This we termed "seeding down;" and the Old Squire liked rye the best of all grain crops for this purpose. "Grass seed 'catches' better with rye than oats, or barley, or even wheat," he was accustomed to say.

When we harvested the grain, he would be seen peering into the stubble with an observant eye, and would then be heard to say, "A pretty good 'catch' this year," or, "It hasn't 'caught' worth a cent."

It was not on more than half the years that we secured a fair wheat crop. Maine is not a State wholly favorable for wheat; yet the Old Squire persisted in sowing it, year by year, although Addison often demonstrated to him that oats were more profitable and could be exchanged for flour. "But a farmer ought to raise his bread-stuff," the old gentleman would rejoin stoutly. "How do we know, too, that some calamity may not cut off the Western wheat crop; then where should we be?"

It is a pity, perhaps, that Eastern farmers do not generally display the same independent spirit.

But the Old Squire himself finally gave up wheat raising. Gram and the girls found fault with our Maine grown wheat flour, because the bread from it was not very white and did not "rise" well. The neighbors had Western flour and their bread was white and light, while ours was darker colored and sometimes heavy, in spite of their best efforts.

No farmer can hold out long against such indoor repinings, but the Old Squire never came to look with favor on Western flour; he admitted that it made whiter bread, but he always declared that it was not as wholesome! The fact was that it seemed to him to be an unfarmerlike proceeding, to buy his flour. For the same reason he would never buy Western corn for his cattle.

"When I cannot raise fodder enough for my stock, I'll quit farming," he would exclaim, when his neighbors told him of the corn they were buying. As a matter of fact, the old gentleman lived to see a good many of his neighbors' farms under mortgage, and held a number of these papers himself. It was not a wholly propitious day for New England farmers when they began buying Western corn, on the theory that they could buy it cheaper than they could raise it themselves. The net result has been that their profits have often gone West, or into the pockets of the railway companies which draw the corn to them.

Another drawback to wheat raising in Maine is the uncertain weather at harvest time. Despite our shrewdest inspection of the weather signs, the wheat as well as the other grain would often get wet in the field, and sometimes it would lie wet so long as to sprout. Sprouted wheat flour makes a kind of bread which drives the housewife to despair.

"Oh, this dog-days weather!" the Old Squire would exclaim, as the grain lay wet in the field, day

after day, or when an August shower came rumbling over the mountains just as we were raking it up into windrows and tumbles.

I had never heard of "dog days" before and was curious to know what sort of days they were. "They set in," the Old Squire informed me, "on the twenty-fifth of July and last till the fifth of September. Then is when the Dog-star rages, and it is apt to be 'catching' weather. Dogs are more liable to run mad at this time of year, and snakes are most venomous then." Such is the olden lore, and I gained an impression that those forty-two days were after a manner unhealthy for man and beast.

Near the middle of August that summer there came the most terrific thunder shower which I had ever witnessed. Halse, Addison and Asa Doane had mowed the acre of barley that morning, and after dinner we three boys went out into the field to turn the swaths, for the sun had been very hot all day. It was while thus employed that we saw the shower rising over the mountains to the westward and soon heard the thunder. It rose rapidly, and the clouds took on, as they rolled upward, a peculiar black, greenish tint.

It was such a tempest as Lucretius describes when he says, —

"So dire and terrible is the aspect of Heaven, that one might think all the Darkness had left Acheron, to be poured out across the sky, as the drear gloom of the storm collects and the Tempest, forging loud thunderbolts, bends down its black face of terror over the affrighted earth."

Gramp called us in, to carry a few cocks of late-made hay into the barn from the orchard, and then bade us shut all the barn doors and make things snug. "For there's a tremendous shower coming, boys," he said. "There's hail in those clouds."

We ran to do as he advised, and had no more than

taken these precautions when the shower struck. Such awful thunder and such bright, vengeful lightning had, the people of the vicinity declared, never been observed in that town, previously. A bolt came down one of the large Balm o' Gilead trees near the house, and the thunder peal was absolutely deafening. Wealthy hid herself in the parlor clothes-closet, and Gram sat with her hands folded in the middle of the sitting-room. Just before the clouds burst, it was so dark in the house that we could scarcely see each others' faces. A moment later the lightning struck a large butternut tree near the calf-pasture wall, across the south field, shivering it so completely that nearly all the top fell; the trunk, too, was split open from the heart.

In fact, the terrific flashes and peals indicated that the lightning was descending to the earth all about us. Two barns were struck and burned in the school district adjoining ours. Rain then fell in sheets, and also hail, which cut the garden vegetables to strings and broke a number of windows. This tempest lasted for nearly an hour, and prostrated the corn and standing grain very badly. An apple tree was also uprooted, for there was violent wind as well as lightning and thunder.

Next morning we were obliged to leave our farm work and repair the roads throughout that highway district, for the shower had gullied the hills almost beyond belief. Altogether it had done a great amount of damage on every hand.

At supper that night, after returning from work on the highway, the Old Squire suddenly asked whether any of us had seen the colts, in the pasture beyond the west field, that day.

No one remembered having seen them since the shower, though we generally noticed them running around the pasture every day. There were three of them, two bays and a black one. The two former

were the property of men in the village, but Black Hawk, as we called him, belonged to us.

"After supper, you had better go see where they are," the Old Squire said to us.

Addison and I set off accordingly. The pasture was partly cleared, with here and there a pine stub left standing, and was of about twenty acres extent. We went up across it to the top of the hill, but could not find the colts. Then we walked around by the farther fence, but discovered no breach in it and no traces where truant hoofs had jumped over it. It was growing dark, and we at length went home to report our ill-success.

"Strange!" the Old Squire said. "We must look them up." But no further search was made that night.

"Is that a hawk?" Halstead said to me, while he and I were out milking a little before sunrise next morning. "Don't you see it? Sailing round over the colt pasture. Too big for a hawk, isn't it?"

A large bird was wheeling slowly above the pasture, moving in lofty circles, on motionless wings.

"I'll bet that's an eagle!" Halse cried. "Can't be a hawk. We couldn't see a hawk so far off."

Suddenly the bird seemed to pause on wing a moment, then descended through the air and disappeared just over the crest of the ridge. Perhaps it was fancy, but we thought we heard the roar of its wings.

"Came down by that high stub!" exclaimed Halstead. "Pounced upon something there! I'll run in and get the shot-gun. The folks aren't up yet. We'll go over. Perhaps we can get a shot at it."

Addison had gone on an errand to the Corners that morning. Halstead got the gun, and setting down our milk pails, we ran across the field, and so onward to the pasture. "'Twas near that stub," whispered Halse, as we began to see the top of it over the crest of the ridge. We peeped over. Down in the hollow

at the foot of the stub was the great bird, flapping and tugging at something — one, two, three animals, lying stretched out on the ground! The sight gave us a sudden shock.

"The colts!" exclaimed Halse, forgetting the eagle. "Dead!"

The big bird raised its head, then rose into the air with mighty flaps and sailed away. We watched it glide off along the ridge, and saw it alight in an oak, the branches of which bent and swayed beneath its weight.

"All dead!" cried Halstead, gazing around. "Isn't that hard!"

The eagle had been tearing at their tongues, which protruded as they lay on the ground. There was a strong odor from the carcasses.

"Been dead some time," Halse exclaimed. "What killed them?"

We examined them attentively. Not the slightest mark, nor wound, could be detected. But a lot of fresh splinters lay at the foot of the pine stub, close by them.

"Must have been lightning," I said, glancing up. "That's just what it was! They were struck during that big shower."

We went to the house with the unwelcome tidings. At first the folks would scarcely believe our account. Then there were rueful looks.

"Ah, those pine stubs ought to have been cut down," exclaimed the Old Squire. "Dangerous things to be left standing in pastures!"

Later in the day we took shovels and went to the pasture, with Asa Doane, to bury the dead animals. While this was going on, the eagle came back and sailed about, high overhead.

"Leave one carcass above ground," said Asa. "That old chap will light here again. You can shoot him then, or catch him in a trap."

So we left Black Hawk unburied, and bringing over an old fox-trap, fastened a large stick of wood to it and set it near. During the day we saw the eagle hovering about the spot, also a great flock of crows, cawing noisily, and next morning when we went over to see if any of them had got into the trap, both trap and stick were gone.

"Must have been the eagle," said Addison. "A crow could never have carried off that trap!" But as neither trap nor eagle was anywhere in sight, we concluded that we had lost the game.

Several days passed, when one morning we heard a pow-wow of crows down in the valley beyond the Little Sea. A flock of them were circling about a tree-top, charging into it.

"Owl, or else a raccoon, I guess," said Addison. "Crows are always hectoring owls and 'coons whenever they happen to spy one out by day."

Thinking that perhaps we might get a 'coon, we took the gun and went down there. But on coming near, instead of a raccoon, lo! there was our lost eagle, perched in the tree-top, with a hundred crows scolding and flapping him. He saw us, and started up as if to fly off, but fell back, and we heard a chain clank.

"Hard and fast in that trap!" exclaimed Addison. The stick and trap had caught among the branches. The big bird was a prisoner. We wished to take him alive, but to climb a tall basswood, and bring down an eagle strong enough to carry off a twelve-pound clog and trap, was not a feat to be rashly undertaken. Addison was obliged to shoot the bird before climbing after him. It was a fine, fierce-looking eagle, measuring nearly six feet from tip to tip of its wings. Its beak was hooked and very strong, and its claws an inch and a half long, curved and exceedingly sharp.

Addison deemed it a great prize, for it was not a

common bald eagle, but a much darker bird. After reading his Audubon, he pronounced it a Golden Eagle and wrote a letter describing its capture, which was published in several New York papers. Gramp gave him all the following day to "mount" the eagle as a specimen. In point of fact, he was nearer three days preparing it. It looked very well when he had it done. I remember only that its legs were feathered down to the feet.

CHAPTER XX

CEDAR BROOMS AND A NOBLE STRING OF TROUT

IT was a part of Gram's household creed, that the wood-house and carriage-house could be properly swept only with a cedar broom. Brooms made of cedar boughs, bound to a broom-stick with a gray tow string, were the kind in use when she and Gramp began life together; and although she had accepted corn brooms in due course, for house work, the cedar broom still held a warm corner in her heart. "A nice new cedar broom is the best thing in the world to take up all the dust and to brush out all the nooks and corners," she used to say to Theodora and Ellen; and when, at stated intervals, it became necessary, in her opinion, to clean the wood-house and other out-buildings, or the cellar, she would generally preface the announcement by saying to them at the breakfast table, "You must get me some broom-stuff, to-day, some of that green cedar down in the swamp below the pasture. I want enough for two or three brooms. Sprig off a good lot of it and get the sprigs of a size to tie on good."

The girls liked the trip, for it gave them an opportunity to gather checkerberries, pull "young ivies," search for "twin sisters" and see the woods, birds and squirrels, with a chance of espying an owl in the swamp, or a hawk's nest in some big tree; or perhaps a rabbit, or a mink along the brook.

If they could contrive to get word of their trip to Catherine Edwards and she could find time to accom-

pany them, so much the more pleasant; for Catherine was better acquainted with the woods and possessed that practical knowledge of all rural matters which only a bright girl, bred in the country with a taste for rambling about, ever acquires.

A morning proclamation to gather broom-stuff having been issued at about this time, the three girls set off an hour or two after dinner for the east pasture; Mrs. Edwards, who was a very kind, easy-going woman, nearly always allowed Catherine to accompany our girls. Kate, in fact, did about as she liked at home, not from indulgence on the part of her mother so much as from being a leading spirit in the household. She was very quick at work; and her mother, instead of having to prompt her, generally found her going ahead, hurrying about to get everything done early in the day. Then, too, she was quick-witted and knew how to take care of herself when out from home. Mrs. Edwards always appeared to treat Kate more as an equal than a daughter. There are children who are spoiled if allowed to have their own way, and others who can be trusted to take their own way without the least danger of injury, and whom it is but an ill-natured exercise of authority to restrict to rules.

The Old Squire was breaking greensward in the south field that afternoon with Addison and Halse driving the team which consisted of a yoke of oxen and two yokes of steers, the latter not as yet very well "broken" to work. My inexperienced services were not required; but to keep me out of hurtful idleness, the old gentleman bade me pick up four heaps of stones on a stubble field near the east pasture wall. It was a kind of work which I did not enjoy very well, and I therefore set about it with a will to get it done as soon as possible.

I had nearly completed the fourth not very large stone pile, when I heard one of the girls calling me from down in the pasture, below the field. It was

Ellen. She came hurriedly up nearer the wall. "Run to the house and get Addison's fish-hook and line and something for bait!" she exclaimed. "For there is the greatest lot of trout over at the Foy mill-pond you ever saw! There's more than fifty of them. Such great ones!"

"Why, how came you to go over there?" said I; for the Foy mill-pond was fully a mile distant, in a lonely place where formerly a saw-mill had stood, and where an old stone dam still held back a pond of perhaps four acres in extent. The ruins of the mill with several broken wheels and other gear were lying on the ledges below the dam; and two curiously gnarled trees overhung the bed of the hollow-gurgling stream. Alders had now grown up around the pond; and there were said to be some very large water snakes living in the chinks of the old dam. It was one of those ponds the shores of which are much infested by dragon-flies, or "devil's darn-needles," as they are called by country boys, — the legend being that with their long stiff bodies, used as darning needles, they have a mission, to sew up the mouths of those who tell falsehoods.

"Oh, Kate wanted to go," replied Ellen. "We went by the old logging road through the woods from the cedar swamp. She thought we would see a turtle on that sand bank across from the old dam, if we sat down quietly and waited awhile. The turtles sometimes come out on that sand bank to sun themselves, she said. So we went over and sat down, very still, in the little path at the top of the dam wall. The sun shone down into the water. We could see the bottom of the pond for a long way out. Kate was watching the sand bank and so was I; but after a minute or two, Theodora whispered, 'Only see those big fish!' Then we looked down into the water and saw them, great lovely fish with spots of red on their sides, swimming slowly along, all together, circling around the foot of the pond as if they were exploring. Oh, how pretty they

looked as they turned; for they kept together and then swam off up the pond again.

"Kate whispered that they were trout. 'But I never saw so many,' she said, 'nor such large ones before; and I never heard Tom nor any of the boys say there were trout here.'

"We thought they had gone perhaps and would not come again," Ellen continued. "But in about ten minutes they all came circling back down the other shore of the pond, keeping in a school together just as when we first saw them. We sat and watched them till they came around the third time, and then Kate said, 'One of us must run home and tell the boys to come with their hooks.' I said that I would go, and I've run almost all the way. Now hurry. I'll rest here till you come. Then we will scamper back."

In a corner of the vegetable garden where I had dug horse-radish a few mornings before, I had seen some exceedingly plethoric angle-worms; and after running to the wood-house and securing a fish-hook, pole and line which Addison kept there, ready strung, I seized an old tin quart, and going to the garden, with a few deep thrusts of the shovel, turned out a score or two of those great pale-purple, wriggling worms. These I as hastily hustled into the quart along with a pint or more of the dirt, then snatching up my pole, ran down to the field where Nell was waiting for me, seated on one of my lately piled stone heaps.

"Come, hurry now," said she; and away we went over the wall and through brakes and bushes, down into the swamp, and then along the old road in the woods, till we came out at the high conical knoll, covered with sapling pines, to the left of the old mill dam. There we espied Kate and Theodora sitting quietly on a log.

"Oh, we thought that you never would come," said the former in a low tone. "But creep along here. Don't make a noise. They've come around six times,

Ellen, since you went away. I never saw trout do so before. I believe they are lost and are exploring, or looking for some way out of this pond. I guess they came down out of North Pond along the Foy Brook; for they are too large for brook trout. They will be back here in a few minutes, again. Now bait the hook and drop in before they come back. Then sit still, and when they come, just move the bait a little and I think you'll get a bite."

I followed this advice and sat for some minutes, dangling a big angle-worm out in the deep water, off the inner wall of the dam, while my three companions watched the water. Presently Theodora whispered that they were coming again; and then I saw what was, indeed, from a piscatorial point of view, a rare spectacle. First the water waved deep down, near the bottom, and seemed filled with dark moving objects, showing here and there the sheen of light brown and a glimmer of flashing red specks, as the sunlight fell in among them. For an instant I was so intent on the sight, that I quite forgot my hook. "Bob it now," whispered Kate, excitedly.

I had scarcely given my hook a bob up and down when, with a grand rush and snap, a big trout grabbed worm, hook and all. Instinctively I gave a great yank and swung him heavily out of the water, my pole bending half double. The trout was securely hooked, or I should have lost him, for he fell first on some drift logs and slid down betwixt them into the water again. Seizing the line in my hands, since the pole was too light for the fish, I contrived to lift him up and land him high and dry on the dam, close at the feet of the girls.

"Well done!" Theodora whispered. "Oh, isn't he a noble great one, and how like sport he jumps about! Too bad to take his life when he's so handsome and was having such a good time among his mates!"

"Unhook him quick and throw in again!" cried

Kate. "Be careful he don't snap your fingers. He's got sharp teeth. Don't let him leap into the water. That's good! We'll keep him behind this log. Now bait again with a good new worm."

"But they've gone," said Theodora. "They darted away when you pulled this one out. It scared them."

I had experienced some difficulty in disengaging my hook from the trout's jaw, but at length put on another worm and dropped in again, not a little excited over my catch.

"I'm afraid they will not come around again," said Ellen. Kate, too, thought it doubtful whether we would see anything more of the school. "I guess they will beat a retreat up to North Pond," said she.

We sat quietly waiting for eight or ten minutes and were losing hope fast, when lo! there they all came again — swimming evenly around the foot of the pond in the deep part, as before, winnowing the water slowly with their fins.

Again I waited till my hook was in the midst of the school; and this time I had scarcely moved it, when another snapped it. I had resolved not to jerk quite so hard this time; but in my excitement I pulled much harder than was necessary to hook the trout and again swung it out and against the wall of the dam. With a vigorous squirm the fish threw himself clean off the hook; but by chance I grabbed him in my hands, as he did so, and threw him over the dam among the raspberry briars — safe.

"Well done again," said Theodora.

In a trice I had rebaited my hook and dropped in a third time; but as before the vagrant school had moved on. They had seemed alarmed for the moment by the commotion, and darted off with accelerated speed. But we now had more confidence that they would return and again settled ourselves to wait.

"Oh, I want to catch one!" exclaimed Ellen.

"I wish we had more hooks," said Kate. "We would fish at different points around the pond."

After about the same interval of time and in the same odd, migratory manner, the beautiful school came around four times more in succession; and every time I swung out a handsome one. Kate then took the pole and caught one. Then Ellen caught one; and afterwards Theodora took her turn and succeeded in landing a fine fellow which flopped off the dam once, but was finally secured. In the scramble to save this last one, however, I rolled a loose stone off the dam into the water; and either owing to the splash made by the stone, or because the trout had completed their survey of the pond, they did not return. We saw nothing more of the school although we had not caught a fifth part of them.

After waiting fifteen or twenty minutes we went along the shore on both sides of the pond but could not discern them anywheres. It is likely that they had gone back to the larger pond, two miles distant.

At that time, the very odd circumstances attending the capture of these trout did not greatly surprise me; for I knew almost nothing of fishing. But within a considerable experience since, I have never seen anything like it.

We laid the nine large trout in a row on the dam, side by side, and then strung them on a forked maple branch. They were indeed beauties! The largest was found that night to weigh three pounds and three quarters; and the smallest two pounds and an ounce. The whole string weighed over twenty-two pounds. Going homeward, we first took turns carrying them, then hung them on a pole for two to carry.

Our folks were at supper when we arrived at the house door with our cedar and our fish. When they saw those trout, they all jumped up from the table. Addison and Halse had never caught anything which

could compare with them for size; both of the boys stared in astonishment.

"Where in the world did you catch those whopping trout?" was then the question which we had to answer in detail.

Kate carried three of them home with her; and we had six for our share. The Old Squire dressed two of the largest; and grandmother rolled them in meal and fried them with pork for our supper. I thought at the time that I had never tasted anything one half as good in my life!

Next morning Addison got up at half past four and having hastily milked his two cows, went over to the old mill-pond, to try his own hand at fishing there. He found Tom Edwards there already; but neither of them caught a trout, nor saw one. Addison went again a day or two after; and the story having got abroad, more than twenty persons fished there during the next fortnight, but caught no trout.

Evidently it was a transient school. I never caught a trout in the mill-pond, afterwards; although the following year Addison made a great catch in a branch of the Foy stream below the dam under somewhat peculiar circumstances.

At the far end of the dam, a hundred feet from the flume, there was an "apron," beneath a waste-way, where formerly the overflow of water went out and found its way for a hundred and fifty yards, perhaps, by another channel along the foot of a steep bank; then, issuing through a dense willow thicket, it joined the main stream from the flume.

Water rarely flowed here now, except in time of freshets, or during the spring and fall rains; and there was such a prodigious tangle of alder, willow, clematis and other vines that for years no one had penetrated it. From a fisherman's point of view there seemed no inducement to do so, since this secondary channel appeared to be dry for most of the time.

In point of fact, however, and unknown to us, there was a very deep hole at the foot of the high bank where the channel was obstructed by a ledge. The hole thus formed was thirty or forty feet in length, and at the deepest place under the bank the water was six or seven feet in depth; but such was the tangle of brush above, below and all about it that one would never have suspected its existence.

An experienced and observing fisherman would have noted, however, that always, even in midsummer, there was a tiny rill of water issuing through the willows to join the main stream; and that, too, when not a drop of water was running over the waste-way of the dam. He would have noted also that this was unusually clear, cold water, like water from a spring. There was, in fact, a copious spring at the foot of the bank near the deep hole; and this hole was maintained by the spring, and not by the water from above the dam.

Addison was a born observer, a naturalist by nature; and on one of these hopeful trips to the mill-pond, he had searched out and found that hidden hole on the old waste-way channel, below the dam. When he had forced his way through the tangled mass of willows, alders and vines and discovered the pool, he found eighteen or nineteen splendid speckled trout in it.

Either these trout had come over the waste-way of the dam in time of freshet, and had been unable to get out through the rick of small drift stuff at the foot of the hole; or else perhaps they were trout that had come in there as small fry and had been there for years, till they had grown to their present size. Certain it is that they were now two- and three-pound trout.

Did Addison come home in haste to tell us of his discovery? Not at all. He did not even allow himself to catch one of the trout at that time, for he knew that Halstead and I had seen him set off for the old mill-pond. He came home without a fish, and re-

marked at the dinner-table that it was of no use to fish for trout in that old pond — which was true enough.

The next wet day, however, he said at breakfast to the Old Squire, "If you don't want me, sir, for an hour or two this morning, I guess I'll go down the Horr Brook and see if I can catch a few trout."

Gramp nodded, and we saw Addison dig his worms and set off. The Horr Brook was on the west side of the farm, while the old mill-pond lay to the southeast. What Addison did was to fish down the Horr Brook for about a mile, to the meadows where the lake woods began. He then made a rapid detour around through the woods to the Foy Brook, and caught four trout out of the hidden preserve below the old dam. Afterwards he went back as he had come to the Horr Brook, then strolled leisurely home with eight pounds of trout.

Of course there was astonishment and questions. "You never caught those trout in the Horr Brook!" Halstead exclaimed. But Addison only laughed.

"Ad, did you get those beauties out of the old mill-pond?" demanded Ellen.

"No," said Addison, but he would answer no more questions.

About two weeks after that he set off fishing to the Horr Brook again, and again returned with two big trout. Nobody else who fished there had caught anything weighing more than half a pound; and in the lake, at that time, there was nothing except pickerel. But all that Addison would say was that he did not have any trouble in catching such trout.

The mystery of those trout puzzled us deeply. Not only Halstead and I, but Thomas Edwards, Edgar Wilbur and the Murch boys all did our best to find out where and how Addison fished, but quite without success.

Cold weather was now at hand and the fishing over;

THOSE BIG TROUT.

Addison astonished us, however, by bringing home two noble trout for Thanksgiving day.

The next spring, about May 1st, he went off fishing, unobserved, and brought home two more big trout. After that if he so much as took down his fish-pole, the rumor of it went round, and more than one boy made ready to follow him. For we were all persuaded that he had discovered some wonderful new brook or trout preserve.

Not even the girls could endure the grin of superior skill which Addison wore when he came home with those big trout. Theodora and Ellen also began to watch him; and the two girls, with Catherine Edwards, hatched a scheme for tracking him. Thomas had a little half-bred cocker spaniel puppy, called Tyro, which had a great notion of running after members of the family by scent. If Thomas had gone out, and Kate wished to discover his whereabouts, she would show him one of Thomas's shoes and say, "Go find him!" Tyro would go coursing around till he took Thomas's track, then race away till he came upon him.

The girls saved up one of Addison's socks, and on a lowery day in June, when they made pretty sure that he had stolen off fishing, Ellen ran over for Kate and Tyro. Thomas was with them when they came back, and Halstead and I joined in the hunt. The sock was brought out for Tyro to scent; then away he ran till he struck Addison's trail, and dashed out through the west field and down into the valley of the Horr Brook.

All six of us followed in great glee, but kept as quiet as possible. It proved a long, hot chase; for when Tyro had gone along the brook as far as the lake woods, he suddenly tacked and ran on an almost straight course through the woods and across the bushy pasture-lands, stopping only now and then for us to catch up. When we came out on the Foy Brook at a distance below the old dam, the dog ran directly

up the stream till he came to the place where the little rill from the hidden hole joined it; then he scrambled in among the thick willows.

We were a little way behind, and knowing that the dog would soon come out at the mill-pond, we climbed up the bank among the low pines on the hither side of the brook.

Tyro was not a noisy dog, but a few moments after he entered the thicket we heard him give one little bark, as if of joy.

"He's found him!" whispered Kate. "Let's keep still!"

Nothing happened for some minutes; then we saw Addison's head appear among the brush, as if to look around. For some time he stood there, still as a mouse, peering about and listening. Evidently he suspected that some one was with the dog, most likely Thomas, and that he had gone to the mill-pond to fish; but we were not more than fifty feet away, lying up in the thick pine brush.

After looking and listening for a long while, Addison drew back into the thicket, but soon reappeared with two large trout, and was hurrying away down the brook when we all shouted, "Oho!"

Addison stopped, looking both sheepish and wrathful; but we pounced on him, laughing so much that he was compelled to own up that he was beaten. He showed us the hole — after we had crept into the thicket — and the ledge where he had sat so many times to fish. "But there are only four more big trout," he said. "I meant to leave them here, and put in twenty smaller ones to grow up."

The girls thought it best to do so, and Halstead and I agreed to the plan; but three or four days later, when Theodora, Ellen and Addison went over to see the hole again, we found that the four large trout had disappeared. We always suspected that Thomas caught them, or that he told the Murch boys or Alfred

Batchelder of the hole. Yet an otter may possibly have found it. In May, two years afterward, Halstead and I caught six very pretty half-pound trout there, but no one since has ever found such a school of beauties as Addison discovered.

CHAPTER XXI

TOM'S FORT

DURING the next week there was what is termed by Congregationalists a "Conference Meeting," at the town of Hebron, distant fifteen miles from the Old Squire's. Gram and he made it a rule to attend these meetings; and on this occasion they set off on Monday afternoon with old Sol and the light driving wagon, in Sunday attire, and did not return till the following Monday. Wealthy went with them; but the rest of us young folks were left, with many instructions, to keep house and look after things at the farm.

Haying was now over; and the wheat and barley were in; but an acre more of late-sown oats still remained to be harvested, also an acre of buckwheat. There was not a little solicitude felt for this acre of buckwheat. With it were connected visions of future buckwheat cakes and maple sirup. I was assured by Ellen and the others who had come to the farm in advance of me, that the maple molasses and candy "flapjacks," made on pans of hard snow, during the previous spring, had been something to smack one's mouth for.

The Old Squire had bidden Addison, who was practically in charge, to mow the oats on Tuesday, and the buckwheat on Thursday, if the weather continued good. Asa Doane was coming to assist us. The oats were to be turned on Wednesday and drawn in on Friday. The buckwheat would need to lie in the swath till the next week and be turned once or twice, in order to cure properly.

We had also a half acre of weeds to pull, in a part of the potato field which had thus far been hoed but once; and an acre of stubble to clear of stones, preparatory to ploughing. The Old Squire did not believe that abundant leisure is good for boys, left alone under such circumstances.

"If you get the loose stones all off the stubble and have time, you can begin to draw off the stone heaps from the piece which we are going to break up in the south field," he said finally, as he got into the wagon and took the reins to drive away. But he laughed when he said it; and Addison laughed, too; for we thought that he had already laid out a long stint for us. Halstead was grumbling about it to himself. "Wonder if he thinks we can do a whole season's work in a week," he exclaimed, spitefully. "Never saw such a man to lay off work! Wants a week to play in, himself, but expects us to stay at home and dig like slaves!"

"Oh, he doesn't want us to hurt ourselves," said Addison. "He will be satisfied if we manage the grain, the weeds and the stones on the stubble. It really isn't so very much for four of us. We could do it in one half the time, by working smart, and have the rest of the time to play in."

Gram had left corresponding work for the girls, indoors, besides cooking, getting the three daily meals and caring for the dairy.

We set to work that afternoon and pulled the weeds, finishing this task before five o'clock. Ellen had found time to make a brief call on Kate Edwards; and at supper, she informed us that Tom had invited us all to come to his "fort," that evening. "He is going to have a fire there and roast some of his early Pine Knot corn," continued Ellen. "He says he has got a whole basketful of ears, all nice in the milk and ready to roast."

"Where is his 'fort?'" I inquired, for this was the

first that I had heard of such a fortification, although the others appeared to know something about it.

"Oh, Tom thinks he has got a great fort over there!" said Halse. "It's no more a fort, like some I've seen, than our sheep pen!"

"Oh, but it is," replied Ellen. "It is a terribly rocky place. Nobody can get into it, if Tom hasn't a mind to let them."

"Pooh!" exclaimed Halse. "One little six pound cannon would knock it all down over his head."

"I don't think so," persisted Ellen.

"What do you know about cannon?" cried Halse.

"Well, I don't know much about them," replied Ellen. "But I do not believe that a small cannon would knock down rocks as big as this house."

This argument increased my curiosity, and Addison now told me something about the so-called fortress. "It is a queer sort of place," said he; "a kind of knoll, with four or five prodigious great rocks around it. I guess we never have been over there since you came, though we passed in sight of it the day we went to dig out the foxes. It is on the line between Mr. Edwards' south field on one side, and the woods of our pasture where those big yellow birches and rock maples are, on the other. Those great rocks lie close together there, on that little knoll, just as if they had been dropped down there like so many big kernels of corn in a hill.

"From what I have read about geology," continued Addison, reflectively, "I think it is likely that some mighty glacier, in long past ages, piled them there. One could imagine that a giant had placed them there, or had dropped them, accidentally out of his big leather apron, as he strode across the continent, in early times."

"Oh, hear him!" cried Halse. "Ad will be out giving lectures on geology next!"

"No," said Addison, laughing, "I don't want to

give lectures. I don't know how the rocks got there, but they got there somehow, for there they are. Two of them, as Nell says, are almost as large as a house; and they all stand around, irregularly, enclosing a sort of little space inside them, as large as — how big is it, Doad?"

"Oh, I should think that it was as large as our sitting-room," she replied.

"It is bigger than that," said Ellen. "It is as big as the sitting-room and parlor together."

"Perhaps it is," assented Theodora. "But it isn't like rooms at all; it is an odd place and there are nooks like little side rooms running back between where the sides of the great rocks approach each other. It is a real pleasant place, sort of gigantic and rustic. I don't wonder that Thomas and Kate like to go there."

"None of these big rocks quite touch together," continued Addison, "but Tom has built up between them with stones, all around, except one narrow place which he calls the fort gate. He has built up all the open places, six or seven feet high, so that it is really like a fort; and he has made a stone fireplace against one of the rocks inside, with a little chimney of flat stones running up the side of the rock, so that he can have a fire there without being plagued by the smoke."

"And he's got a wood-pile in there," said Ellen, "and seats to sit on, round his fireplace. It is a cozy place, I tell you; the wind doesn't strike you at all in there; and the knoll is quite a good deal higher than the ground about it. You climb up a little path and turn the corner of one big rock, and then go in between that one and another, for fifteen or twenty feet, till you come to the open place inside, where the fireplace is. Tom and Kate gave a little party there last fall. Tom was a number of days building the fireplace and the wall and getting ready. We all went there one evening and Kate and I played there one afternoon, a week after that. But I guess they haven't been there

at all this spring and summer. I haven't heard them say anything about it for a long time, till this afternoon. 'Tell the boys and Doad to come over here this evening,' Tom said, as I was coming away. 'I'm going to roast corn down at my fort to-night.'"

"Let's all go over after it gets dark and storm his fort!" exclaimed Halse. "We can take sods and pitch them over the rocks into his fort after he gets in there and is roasting corn!"

"I don't think that would be a very polite way of accepting his invitation," said Theodora.

"That would be contrary to all the laws of war, to storm a neighboring nation's fort, before war was declared!" said Addison, laughing. "That would be a sad piece of international treachery."

"Oh, dear, only hear the big words roll out!" cried Halse. "Ad's a walking dictionary."

"Well, dictionaries are always handy to have about," said Theodora, smoothing away the rudeness of this ill-natured remark. Addison did not mind, however; it was only occasionally that Halse's flings disturbed him.

"Yes, let's all go," said he. "We will get our milking off early and our chores done. Then we will take a lantern and start; for it will be nine o'clock before we get back home, and we shall have to go through the little piece of woods between here and the Aunt Hannah lot."

The girls had prepared a nice supper. Ellen had been making pop-overs, and Theodora had fried a great panful of crispy doughnuts. They cut a sage cheese to go with these; and rather unwisely Ellen made a pot of fresh coffee. It tasted much better than that which we ordinarily had at breakfast; for she roasted the coffee, then ground it smoking hot from the oven, and poured it into the pot before it had time to lose its delicate aroma. They set on a brimming pitcherful of cream to put in it; and we each had two

cupfuls, at table, in consequence of which we all felt very bright and jolly throughout the evening. But this was not a wise procedure, from a hygienic point of view; I scarcely slept at all that night.

In the twilight we loaded our pockets with early apples, then went across the fields, through the pasture and over the hill, toward the fort. The great trees in the Aunt Hannah lot pasture favored a covert approach, and we drew near, very quietly, to surprise our friends. It was now dusk, and halting under a great beech, we reconnoitered the rocks on the knoll for some moments. Smoke was rising from out the fort; at least we could smell it; and presently a pale gleam of firelight shone up into the leafy top of a great black cherry tree which stood within the space enclosed by the rocks. But not a word could we hear spoken inside, or about the fort.

"Perhaps Kate hasn't come down from the house yet," Ellen said. "Let's steal up softly till we are at the foot of the knoll; then you boys rush up the path and surprise Tom. Shout 'Surrender, your fort is ours!' as you rush in."

We approached, apparently without being discovered, and then emerging suddenly from under the shadow of the great trees, ran up the path and around the corner of the rock at the gateway with tumultuous cheers!

But we soon found that instead of surprising the fort, we had been beguiled into a trap, ourselves. Kate and Tom had guessed our tactics, in advance, and were watching us all the while. We rushed into the narrow passage, but found our progress arrested there by four or five stout bars; and then bang! went Tom's gun, from the rocks over our heads. He and Kate were both up there in a strong position; and Tom's only response to our shouts was, "Throw down your arms or we will open fire on you with grape and canister!"

" We may as well surrender," said Addison, laughing. " Nell, you proved a very bad general. You've lost your whole army before striking a single blow."

" So I see," replied Ellen. " I'm disgraced and shall be superseded at once."

In 1866 the circumstance of superseding one general by another was still very familiar in the minds of every one, old and young, in the United States.

We were now admitted to the fort. To me, at that time, Tom's fort was a great novelty. I present a photograph of it, as the knoll and rocks now appear; but the walls have mostly fallen down. I believe that the place was stormed once by a party of boys who broke down much of the light stone wall, in imitation of sieges, in ancient warfare. But that evening it was all new to me and made a lasting impression on my boyish fancy. They had a fire burning; and a row of short Pine Knot corn ears stood roasting in front of it. There were two long seats consisting each of a board placed on piles of flat stones with another board for the back, held in its place by short stakes, driven into the ground. The light shone on the great rough sides of the schistose rocks and on the trunks of the cherry tree and two white birch trees inside the enclosed space. It was so much shut in as to seem like a room in a house; yet overhead the stars could be seen shining. Sufficient warmth was radiated from the fire to make us all quite comfortable as we sat around.

Kate had brought down a large ball of butter and half a dozen case-knives. We buttered our corn and feasted on it, then finished off on Early Sweet Bough, Sweet Harvey and August Pippin apples. After every few minutes, Tom would ascend, by stone steps which he had built up, to the top of the largest rock of the group, to see if any " enemies " were about, as he said. It was possible that Alfred Batchelder, or the Murch boys, or Ned Wilbur, might come around and scale the wall.

As we sat by the fire, regaling ourselves, we talked after the manner of the young to whom everything under the sun looks possible of achievement, to whom life looks long enough for every plan that tickles the fancy and to whom as yet the hard experiences of life have administered few rebuffs.

Oh, for that splendid courage of youth again! that joyous confidence that everything can be done! It is the heritage of young hearts. It is given us but once; and it was then ours.

"I would like to command a strong, big fort on the frontier of the country," exclaimed Tom. "The enemy wouldn't surprise me. I would be ready for them. If they attacked me they would get it hot, I tell you!

"I mean to study and try to get an appointment to West Point," he continued, enthusiastically. "Then I may command a fort somewheres. I tell you, West Point is the place to go! Don't you say so, Ad?"

"It is a good place to get a military education," replied Addison. "And a military education is a great thing to have, if there is a war. But there may never be another war, Tom; most of folks hope there will not be; but I shouldn't much wonder if there were another, before many years."

"Oh, I hope not," exclaimed Theodora, fervently. In fact, the Civil War with its sad afflictions was still too fresh in the minds of all in our family to be spoken of without a sense of bereavement.

"But I don't think that I should like a military life altogether," continued Addison. "Promotion is dreadfully slow, unless there's war; and even after you are a general, there is no money in it. I want to go into something that will give me all the money I want; and I want a lot of it."

"I had rather have fame than money," exclaimed Tom. "Nothing makes anybody feel so good, as to

know that folks are saying, 'He did a big thing. Nobody else could have done it.'"

"Tom, you want to be a hero," said Theodora.

"Well, I do," replied Tom. "I don't want to be such a hero as there are in novels. But I want to do something that will put me right up in the world."

I remember that I felt much like that myself, but did not quite like to say so outright.

"The trouble is that in common every-day life there do not seem to be many chances to do great things," remarked Addison, thoughtfully. "There are always a few distinguished men, like General Grant, General Sherman and President Lincoln, but only a few. There couldn't be a thousand famous men in a nation at once. We couldn't think of so many, even if they all had done great deeds. We could not even remember the names of so many heroes. So it is pretty plain that only a few, five or six, perhaps, of the millions of boys and girls in the country, can be really famous. All the rest have got to take a lower place and make the best of it. But if a fellow can plan and carry out enterprises to make lots of money, he can do a great deal with it in the world."

"I don't care just for money!" cried Tom again; "I want to *do* something!"

"Tom, you ought to be an explorer," said Theodora; "a discoverer, like Livingstone, or Sir John Franklin, or Dr. Kane. If you could discover the North Pole, or a new race of people in Africa, you would be famous."

"I should like that," exclaimed Tom. "I should like to make a voyage up north. I can stand any amount of cold; and I never saw the sun so hot yet that I couldn't work, or run a mile, under it. Those folks that get sun-struck must be sort of sick, pindling fellows, I guess."

"Tom, I think that you would make a real go-ahead explorer," said Ellen. "I hope you will stick to it."

"Well, it takes money to fit out exploring expeditions," said Addison. "But there are other discoveries fully as important as those in the far north, or in Africa; discoveries in science bring the best kind of fame, like those of Franklin, Morse, Tyndall, Darwin and Pasteur. There is no end to the discoveries that can be made in science. It is the great field for explorers, I think. Grand new discoveries will be made right along now, and the more there are made the more there will be made; for one scientific discovery always seems to open the way to another."

"Oh, but I don't know anything about science," exclaimed Tom. "I don't believe I ever shall."

"No one does without hard study," replied Addison. "But any one can afford to study if by doing so some splendid new invention can be brought about."

"Dora, what are we girls going to do?" said Kate, laughing. "It makes me feel lonesome to hear the boys talk of the great exploits they mean to perform."

"There doesn't seem to be so much that girls can do," replied Theodora, with a sigh. "Still, I know of one thing I wish to do very much," she continued with a glance at Addison.

"What is it?" said Tom. "What are you going to astonish the world with?"

"Oh, I haven't the courage to talk about it," replied Theodora. "And it looks so hard to me and I shall need to study so long to get prepared, that I sometimes think I never shall do it."

"Well, girls can all make school-mistresses," said Addison.

"Kate is going to make something besides a school-mistress," said Ellen. "Kate means to study chemistry and be a chemist."

"She said last winter that she meant to learn how to telegraph and be a telegraph operator," said Halse, laughing.

"Yes, I did," replied Kate, coldly. "But I have

changed my mind. I don't know much about chemistry yet, but I think I like it. I mean to study it and I mean to learn all about drugs, too, and have a pharmacy in some large pleasant town. I'll make as much money as Addison; for I think money is a great thing."

"Shall you have a soda-fountain in your drug store and sell soda with a 'stick' in it?" asked Halse.

"I don't think so," replied Kate. "But if I do, I shall hire somebody like you to tend the 'stick' part of it."

Halse had sat poking fun at all the others, while they talked of their plans, pretending to be on the point of fainting away, when Addison, Tom and Theodora discussed different pursuits in life; and this retort from Kate hit him hard; he was angry. "I would not work for anyone with a tongue like yours," he exclaimed.

"Never mind," replied Kate. "We will not quarrel about that now. It is rather too far ahead. It will take you years and years to get education enough to tend a soda-fountain," she added, mischievously. "Perhaps you know enough already about putting the 'stick' in it, as you call it; I'm rather afraid you do from what I heard your friend Alfred Batchelder say a few days ago. It doesn't sound well for little boys like you to talk about 'sticks' in soda."

Halse usually fared ill when he attempted jokes at Kate's expense. It seemed odd to the rest of us that he did not learn to avoid such efforts; but he never did; he was always worsted, promptly, and always got angry. "Tom, if I had such a sister as you've got, I'd tie a hot potato in her mouth," he exclaimed.

"She is a terrible girl," said Tom, with a wink. "Her tongue is just like a new whalebone whip with a silk snapper on it. Takes the skin right off. But as she is all the sister I've got, I try to put up with her.

"She is a pretty good sister," he added, going across where Kate sat and sitting down beside her. "I don't know what I should do without her."

"Thank you, Tommy dear," said Kate. "I know now that you want me to coax father to let you take 'White-foot' (their colt) to the Fair. Perhaps I will; but it will not amount to anything. You will not get a premium on White-foot, if you take him. He isn't big and handsome enough. You've looked at him till your eyes think he is, but he isn't. I shall not tell father that I think he will take a premium, because I want father to respect my judgment more than that."

"Kate, you don't know anything about colts!" cried Tom. "That's the best colt in this town!"

"O my! O my!" groaned Kate. "Once let a boy begin to dote on a colt, particularly if he calls it *his* colt, and he can soon see beauty, size, speed, everything else in it, in matchless perfection. It's a kind of disease, a horse-disease that gets into his eye. Tom's got it badly. Please excuse his boasting!

"Here, Tom, pass this nice buttered ear of corn over to Halse, and tell him that I didn't mean to hurt his feelings — quite so badly," she added. "I only meant to hurt them a little."

This was like Kate; she would always talk like that; but she rarely said more than was true and never treasured up ill-feeling, nor wished others to do so.

But Halse would not accept her peace-offering.

"Ah, well," sighed Ellen, "I really am afraid that there is nothing I shall ever be able to do that will bring me either fame or money. I cannot think of a thing that I am good for."

"Oh, yes, there is!" cried Addison. "You have a sure hand on pop-overs, Nell, pop-overs and cookies."

"Right, Ad, I can make pop-overs," replied Ellen, laughing. "Perhaps I can get a living, cooking."

"Well, that is a pretty important thing, I think," remarked Thomas, candidly. "Somebody must know how to cook, and I like to have victuals taste good."

"I do not think those who cook get much credit for their labors," said Kate. "Mother and I are cooking every day and our men folks come in, sit down at table and swallow it all, with never a word of praise when we cook well; but if we make a mistake, and bread, or cake, or pie does not taste quite right, then they will growl and look at us as surly as if we had never cooked well in all our lives. I think that is rather hard usage and poor thanks for long service. Mother does not mind it. 'Oh, that is something you must get used to, Kate,' she says to me. 'Men folks always behave so. We never get much praise for our cooking.' But I do mind it. When I've made a nice batch of tea rolls, or cakes, I want them to know it and to act as if they appreciated it."

"That is just the way it is at our house," said Ellen.

"Yes," remarked Theodora. "The only way our boys ever show that they appreciate our good biscuit, or cake, is by eating about twice as much of it, which of course makes it all the harder for us to cook more. When we get a poor batch of bread it will last twice as long as good; — that's one comfort."

"Why, Doad, I never heard you talk like that before," said Halse, with a look of surprise.

"No more did I," remarked Addison. "Theodora, I am scandalized."

"I know it is horrid," she replied. "But I have thought it, if I never have said it, many and many a time, when I've nearly roasted myself over the hot stove, this summer, and thought I had enough cooked to last two days, at least; and then in would march you three hungry boys, to table, and eat it all up, eat my whole panful of doughnuts and finish off with eight or ten cookies apiece, just because they were

good, or a little better than usual. If they had been a little poorer they would have lasted two days, surely."

"Doad, you are getting positively wicked," said Addison. "I don't see what has come over you. You are not yourself."

"She is only telling the cold truth," exclaimed Kate. "Boys all seem to think that victuals grow ready cooked in the house somewheres, and that the more they can eat the better it ought to suit us. Here's Tom, a pretty good sort of boy generally, but he will come into the pantry, after he has been racing about out-of-doors, and commit ravages that it will take me hours of hot, hateful work to repair. Oh, he is a perfect pantry scourge, a doughnut-and-cooky terror! Why, I have had what I knew must be half a big panful of doughnuts, or cookies, enough for supper and breakfast, certainly; and then about three or four o'clock of a hot August afternoon, I would hear Tom's boots clumpering in the pantry, and by the time I would get there, he would be just sneaking out, grinning like a Chessy-cat, with his old mouth full and his pockets bulging out. I will look in my pan and there will not be enough left to put on a plate once! Then I know I have got to build a fire, get on my old floury apron and go at it again, when I've just got cool and comfortable, after my day's work!

"When he does that, I sometimes think I don't know whether I love him well enough to cook for him, or not. For when he is hungry and comes tearing in like that, he will carry off more than he can eat. His eyes want all he sees. He will carry off lots more than he can possibly eat; I've found it, time and again, laid up out in the woodshed; and once I found eight of my doughnuts hid in a hole in the garden wall. He thought that he could eat the whole panful, but found that he couldn't."

"Oh, that was only laying up a store against days of

famine," said Tom, calmly. "Some days the pantry is awfully bare; and Kate, too, has a caper of hiding the victuals. I call that a plaguey mean trick — when a fellow's hungry! I clear the pan when I do find it, to get square with her."

"Well," Addison remarked, "the girls have presented their side of the work pretty strongly; but I rather guess the boys could say something on their side; — how they have to work in the hot sun, all day long, to plough and harrow and sow and plant and hoe the crops, to get the bread stuff to cook into food. The girls want cooked victuals, too, as well as we. The hot, hard work isn't all on one side."

"That's so!" echoed Tom and Halse, fervently.

"I often come in tired, hot and sweaty after a drink of water, in the sweltering summer afternoons, and find our girls in the cool sitting-room, rocking by the windows, looking as comfortable as you please, reading novels," continued Addison.

"That's so!" we boys exclaimed.

"Not that I grudge them their comfort," Addison went on, laughing. "I don't. I like to see them comfortable. Besides girls ought not to work so hard and long as boys; they are not so strong, nor so well able to work in the heat. But I think that a great deal of the hardship that Kate and Doad and Nell complain of, about cooking over the hot stove, is due to a bad method which all the women hereabouts seem to follow. They cook twice every day. Fact, they seem to be cooking all the time. They all do their cooking in stoves, with small ovens that will not hold more than three or four pies, or a couple of loaves of bread at once. By the next day they have to bake again, and so on. In summer, particularly, their faces are red from bending over the hot stove about half the time."

"But what would you do, Addison?" asked Theodora.

"I'll tell you what I would do," replied Addison. "I would do just what I suggested to Gram last spring. The old lady was getting down to peep into the stove oven and hopping up again about every two minutes. She looked tired and her face was as red as a peony. 'Gram,' said I, 'I'll tell you what I'll do, if you want me to. I'll take the oxen and cart and go over to the Aunt Hannah lot, and draw home some brick there are in an old chimney over there; and then we will get a cask of lime and some sand for mortar, and have a mason come half a day and build you a good big brick oven, beside the wash-room chimney. It can be seven or eight feet long by four or five wide, big enough to bake all the pies, bread, pork and beans and most of the meat you want to cook for us, in a week. Then after you have baked, Saturday afternoon, you no need to have much more cooking to do till the next Saturday. All you need do over the stove will be to make coffee and tea, boil eggs and potatoes once in a while and warm up the food.' 'There's an oven that goes with the sitting-room chimney,' said she; 'I used always to bake in it; but somehow I have got out of the way of it, since we began to use stoves.' I couldn't get her to say that she wanted an oven, so I did nothing about it. But I know it would be a great deal easier, after she got the habit of it again."

"But how could you have hot tea-rolls every night and morning, Addison, with an oven like that?" asked Ellen.

"I should not want them, myself," replied Addison. "They nearly always smell so strongly of soda that I do not like them; and I do not think they are wholesome. For my own part I like bread better, or bread made into toast."

"Well, Ad, I think that sounds like a pretty good plan," said Kate. "Mother has an oven, too; but we never use it now, except to smoke bacon in. I think

it would save us a great deal of hard work, if we baked in it once a week."

"Hark," said Tom, suddenly.

Far aloft, overhead, a faint "quark-quock" was heard.

"'Tis a flock of wild geese, going over," said Addison. "It's early in the season for them to be on their way to the south."

"Gram says that's a sign of an early winter," said Ellen.

We sat listening to the occasional quiet note of the flock gander for some moments till they passed out of hearing toward the lake. Addison then lighted our lantern; and after accompanying Tom and Kate a part of the way to the Edwards place, across the fields, we bade them good night and made our own way home.

Neighbor Wilbur had called at the door, during the evening, and left our mail on the doorstep. There was a letter for me from my mother, and also a circular from some swindling fellow in "Gotham," informing me most positively that for the sum of one dollar, a powder would be forwarded to me by mail, which, when dissolved and applied to my upper lip, would produce a moustache in the course of three or four weeks. I laid it away, thinking that I was perhaps not quite old enough for so ambitious an effort, but that it might be of importance to me, later.

We went to "Tom's fort" again on Wednesday evening; and I remember that one of the stones in the fireplace exploded that night. It burst in several pieces with a sharp report like that of a pistol. One of these hit Halse, scorching his wrist somewhat. At first we thought that someone had mischievously put powder in the fireplace; but after examining the pieces of stone carefully, Addison decided that it had burst from some unequal expansion of its substance, or of moisture in it, due to the heat.

That night, too, those long-delayed ambrotypes came home from artist Lockett. Lockett sent them up to us by Mr. Edwards, who had driven to the village that day.

In the sitting-room, that evening, after returning from the " fort," we examined them with great interest, each anxious to see what the result had been to us, personally. Halstead, I recollect, was wofully disappointed in his. Truth to say, the picture was far from good; and it is supposed that he destroyed it, later, in a fit of pique, for it mysteriously disappeared.

Indeed, the history of that day's little crop of ambrotypes is rather tragic. The Old Squire's and Gram's, alas, were lost in the farmhouse fire (1883). Addison's and Theodora's shared the same fate. Ellen lent hers to her first sweetheart, a college student named Cobb, at Colby University. He was unfortunately drowned a few months later; and for some cause the ambrotype was not returned. Little Wealthy's alone has survived the vicissitudes of time.

The pictures in this book are mainly from photographs taken subsequently.

CHAPTER XXII

HIGH TIMES

TRUTH to say, we had a pretty "high time" that week. When not at Tom's fort evenings, our youthful neighbors came to our house. Sweet corn was in the "milk;" and early apples, pears and plums were ripe. We roasted corn ears and played hide-and-seek by moonlight, over the house, wagon-house, wood-shed, granary and both barns.

I am inclined to believe that the Old Squire did not leave work enough to keep us properly out of that idleness which leads to mischief. For on the afternoon of the fourth day, we broke one wheel of the ox cart and hay rack, while "coasting" in it. There was a long slope in the east field; and we coasted there, all getting into the cart and letting it run down backwards, dragging the "tongue" on the ground behind it: not the proper manner of using a heavy cart.

After we had coasted down, we hauled the cart back with the oxen which we yoked for the purpose. The wheel was broken on account of the cart running off diagonally and striking a large stone.

We were obliged to own up to the matter on the Old Squire's return. He said little; but after considering the matter over night, he held a species of moot court in the sitting-room, heard all the evidence and then, good-humoredly, "sentenced" Addison, Halstead and myself to work on the highway that fall till we had earned enough to repair the wheel, six dollars; and speaking for myself, it was the most

salutary bit of correction which I ever received; it led me to feel my personal responsibility for damage done foolishly.

But it is not of the broken cart wheel, or hide-and-seek by moonlight, that I wish to speak here, but of another diversion next day, and of a mysterious stranger who arrived at nick of time to participate in it.

Generally speaking, Theodora did not excel as a cook. She was much more fond of reading than of housework and domestic duties, although at the farm she always did her share conscientiously. Ellen had a greater natural bent toward cookery.

But there was one article of food which Theodora could prepare to perfection and that was fried pies. Such at least was the name we had for them; and we boys thought that if "Doad" had known how to do nothing else in the world but fry pies, she would still be a shining success in life. We esteemed her gift all the more highly for the reason that it was extra-hazardous. Making fried pies is nearly as dangerous as working in a powder-mill; those who have made them will understand what this means. I know a housewife who lost the sight of one of her eyes from a fried pie explosion. In another instance fully half the kitchen ceiling was literally coated with smoking hot fat, from the frying-pan, thrown up by the bursting of a pie.

Let not a novice like myself, however, presume to descant on the subject of fried pies to the thousands who doubtless know all the details of their manufacture. Theodora first prepared her dough, sweetened and mixed like ordinary doughnut dough, rolled it like a thick pie crust and then enclosed the "filling," consisting of mince-meat, or stewed apple, or gooseberry, or plum, or blackberry; or perhaps peach, raspberry, or preserved cherries. Only such fruits must be cooked and the pits or stones of plums or peaches care-

fully removed. The edges of the dough were wet and dexterously crimped together, so that the pie would not open in frying.

Then when the big pan of fat on the stove was just beginning to get smoking hot, the pies were launched gently in at one side and allowed to sink and rise. And about that time it was well to be watchful; for there was no telling just when a swelling, hot pie might take a fancy to enact the role of a bomb-shell and blow the blistering hot fat on all sides.

After suffering from a bad burn on one of her wrists the previous winter, Theodora had learned not to take chances with fried pies. She had a face mask which Addison had made for her, from pink pasteboard, and a pair of blue goggles for the eyes, which some member of the family had once made use of for snow blindness. The mask as I remember wore an irresistible grin.

When ready to begin frying two dozen pies, Theodora donned the mask and goggles and put on a pair of old kid gloves. Then if spatters of hot fat flew, she was none the worse; — but it was quite a sight to see her rigged for the occasion. The goggles were of portentous size, and we boys used to clap and cheer when she made her appearance.

As an article of diet, perhaps, fried pies could hardly be commended for invalids; but to a boy who had been working hard, or racing about for hours in the fresh air out of doors, they were simply delicious and went exactly to the right spot. Few articles of food are more appetizing to the eye than the rich doughnut brown of a fine fried pie.

That forenoon we coaxed Theodora and Ellen to fry a batch of three dozen, and two "Jonahs;" and the girls, with some misgivings as to what Gram would say to them for making such inroads on "pie timber," set about it by ten o'clock. Be it said, however, that "closeness" in the matter of daily food

was not one of Gram's faults. She always laid in a large supply of " pie timber " and was not much concerned for fear of a shortage.

They filled half a dozen with mince-meat, half a dozen with stewed gooseberry, and then half a dozen each, of crab apple jelly, plum, peach and blackberry. They would not let us see what they filled the " Jonahs " with, but we knew that it was a fearful load. Generally it was with something shockingly sour, or bitter. The " Jonahs " looked precisely like the others and were mixed with the others on the platter which was passed at table, for each one to take his or her choice. And the rule was that whoever got the " Jonah pie " must either eat it, or crawl under the table for a foot-stool for the others during the rest of the meal!

What they actually put in the two " Jonahs," this time, was wheat bran mixed with cayenne pepper — an awful dose such as no mortal mouth could possibly bear up under! It is needless to say that the girls usually kept an eye on the Jonah pie or placed some slight private mark on it, so as not to get it themselves.

When we were alone and had something particularly good on the table, Addison and Theodora had a habit of making up rhymes about it, before passing it around, and sometimes the rest of us attempted to join in the recreation, generally with indifferent success. Kate Edwards had come in that day, and being invited to remain to our feast of fried pies, was contributing her wit to the rhyming contest, when chancing to glance out of the window, Ellen espied a gray horse and buggy with the top turned back, standing in the yard, and in the buggy a large elderly, dark-complexioned man, a stranger to all of us, who sat regarding the premises with a smile of shrewd and pleasant contemplation.

" Now who in the world can that be? " exclaimed

Ellen in low tones. "I do believe he has overheard some of those awful verses you have been making up."

"But someone must go to the door," Theodora whispered. "Addison, you go out and see what he has come for."

"He doesn't look just like a minister," said Halstead.

"Nor just like a doctor," Kate whispered. "But he is somebody of consequence, I know, he looks so sort of dignified and experienced."

"And what a good, old, broad, distinguished face," said Ellen.

Thus their sharp young eyes took an inventory of our caller, who, I may as well say here, was Hannibal Hamlin, recently Vice-President of the United States and one of the most famous anti-slavery leaders of the Republican party before the Civil War.

The old Hamlin homestead, where Hannibal Hamlin passed his boyhood, was at Paris Hill, Maine, eight or ten miles to the eastward of the Old Squire's farm; he and the Old Squire had been young men together, and at one time quite close friends and classmates at Hebron Academy.

In strict point of fact, Mr. Hamlin's term of office as Vice-President with Abraham Lincoln, had expired; and at this time he had not entered on his long tenure of the Senatorship from Maine. Meantime he was Collector of Customs for the Port of Boston, but a few days previously had resigned this lucrative office, being unwilling longer to endorse the erratic administrative policy of President Andrew Johnson by holding an appointment from him.

In the interim he was making a brief visit to the scenes of his boyhood home, and had taken a fancy to drive over to call on the Old Squire. But we of the younger and lately-arriving generation, did not even know "Uncle Hannibal" by sight and had not the

slightest idea who he was. Addison went out, however, and asked if he should take his horse.

"Why, Joseph S— still lives here, does he not?" queried Mr. Hamlin, regarding Addison's youthful countenance inquiringly.

"Yes, sir," replied Addison. "I am his grandson."

"Ah, I thought you were rather young for one of his sons," Mr. Hamlin remarked. "I heard, too, that he had lost all his sons in the War."

"Yes, sir," Addison replied soberly.

Mr. Hamlin regarded him thoughtfully for a moment. "I used to know your grandfather," he said. "Is he at home?"

Addison explained the absence of Gramp and Gram. "I am very sorry they are away," he added.

"I am sorry, too," said Mr. Hamlin, "I wanted to see them and say a few words to them." He began to turn his horse as if to drive away, but Theodora, who was always exceedingly hospitable, had gone out and now addressed our caller with greater cordiality.

"Will you not come in, sir?" she exclaimed. "Grandfather will be very sorry! Do please stop a little while and let the boys feed your horse."

Mr. Hamlin regarded her with a paternal smile. "I will get out and walk around a bit, to rest my legs," he replied.

Once he was out of the buggy, Addison and I took his horse to the stable; and Theodora having first shown him the garden and the long row of bee hives, led the way to the cool sitting-room, and domesticated him in an easy chair. We heard her relating recent events of our family history to him, and answering his questions.

Meantime the fried pies were waiting and getting cold; and when Addison and I had returned from the stable, we all began to feel a little impatient. Ellen and Kate set the pies in the oven, to keep them warm; we did not like to begin eating them with company

in the sitting-room, and so lingered hungrily about, awaiting developments. "How long s'pose he will stay!" Halse exclaimed crossly; and Addison began brushing up a little, in order to go in and help do the honors of the house with Theodora.

"He is a pretty nice old fellow," Addison remarked to Kate. "Have you any idea who he is?"

But Kate, though born in the county, had never seen him. Just then the sitting-room door opened, and we heard "Doad" saying, "We haven't much for luncheon to-day, but fried pies, but we shall all be glad to have you sit down with us."

"What an awful fib!" whispered Ellen behind her hand to Kate; and truth to say, his coming had rather upset our anticipated pleasure; but Mr. Hamlin had taken a great fancy to Theodora and was accepting her invitation, with vast good-nature.

What a great dark man he looked, as he followed Theodora out to the table.

"These are my cousins that I have told you of," she was saying, and then mentioned all our names to him and afterwards Kate's, although Mr. Hamlin had not seen fit to tell us his own; we supposed that he was merely some pleasant old acquaintance of Gramp's early years.

He was seated in Gramp's place at table and, after a brief flurry in the kitchen, the big platterful of fried pies was brought in. What Ellen and Theodora had done was, carefully to pick out the two "Jonahs" and lay them aside. We were now all gathered around. Addison and Theodora exchanged glances and there was a little pause of interrogation, in case our caller might possibly be a clergyman, after all, and might wish to say grace.

He evinced no disposition to do so, however; and laughing a little in spite of herself, Doad raised the platter and assayed to pass it to our guest.

"And are these the 'fried pies?'" he asked with the

broadest of smiles. "They resemble huge doughnuts. But I now remember that my mother used to fry something like this, when I was a boy at home, over at Paris Hill; and my recollection is that they were very good."

"Yes, the most of them are very good," said Addison, by way of making conversation, "unless you happen to get the 'Jonah.'"

"And what's the 'Jonah?'" asked our visitor.

Amidst much laughter, this was explained to him — also the penalty. Mr. Hamlin burst forth in a great shout of laughter, which led us to surmise that he enjoyed fun.

"But we have taken the 'Jonahs' out of these," Theodora made haste to reassure him.

"What for?" he exclaimed.

"Why — why — because we have company," stammered Doad, much confused.

"And spoil the sport?" cried our visitor. "Young lady, I want those 'Jonahs' put back."

"Oh, but they are awful 'Jonahs!'" pleaded Theodora.

"I want those 'Jonahs' put back," insisted Mr. Hamlin. "I shall have to decline to lunch here, unless the 'Jonahs' are in their proper places. Fetch in the 'Jonahs.'"

Very shame-faced, Ellen brought them in.

"No hokus-pokus now," cried our visitor, and nothing would answer, but that we should all turn our backs and shut our eyes, while Kate put them among the others in the platter.

It was then passed and all chose one. "Each take a good, deep mouthful," cried Mr. Hamlin, entering mirthfully into the spirit of the game. "Altogether — now!"

We all bit, eight bites at once; as it chanced no one got a "Jonah," and the eight fried pies rapidly disappeared.

"But these are good!" cried our visitor. "Mine

was gooseberry." Then turning to Theodora, "How many times can a fellow try for a 'Jonah' here?"

"Five times!" replied Doad, laughing and not a little pleased with the praise.

The platter was passed again, and again no one got bran and cayenne.

But at the third passing, I saw Kate start visibly when our visitor chose his pie. "All ready. Bite!" he cried; and we bit! but at the first taste he stopped short, rolled his eyes around and shook his head with his capacious mouth full.

"Oh, but you need not eat it, sir!" cried Theodora, rushing round to him. "You need not do anything!"

But without a word our bulky visitor had sunk slowly out of his chair and pushing it back, disappeared under the long table.

For a moment we all sat, scandalized, then shouted in spite of ourselves. In the midst of our confused hilarity, the table began to oscillate; it rose slowly several inches, then moved off, rattling, toward the sitting-room door! Our jolly visitor had it on his back and was crawling ponderously but carefully away with it on his hands and knees; — and the rest of us were getting ourselves and our chairs out of the way! In fact, the remainder of that luncheon was a perfect gale of laughter. The table *walked* clean around the room and came very carefully back to its original position.

After the hilarity had subsided, the girls served some very nice large, sweet blackberries, which our visitor appeared to relish greatly. He told us of his boyhood at Paris Hill; of his fishing for trout in the brooks thereabouts, of the time he broke his arm and of the doctor who set it so unskilfully that it had to be broken again and re-set; of the beautiful tourmaline crystals which he and his brother found at Mt. Mica; and of his school-days at Hebron Academy; and all

FRIED PIES.

with such feeling and such a relish, that for an hour we were rapt listeners.

When at length he declared that he positively must be going on his way, we begged him to remain over night, and brought out his horse with great reluctance.

Before getting into the buggy, he took us each by the hand and saluted the girls, particularly "Doad," in a truly paternal manner.

"I've had a good time!" said he. "I am glad to see you all here at this old farm in my dear native state; but (and we saw the moisture start in his great black eyes) it touches my heart more than I can tell you, to know of the sad reason for your coming here. You have my heartiest sympathy.

"Tell your grandparents, that I should have been very glad to see them," he added, as he got in the buggy and took the reins from Addison.

"But, sir," said Theodora, earnestly, for we were all crowding up to the buggy, "grandfather will ask who it was that called."

"Oh, well, you can describe me to him!" cried Mr. Hamlin, laughing (for he knew how cut up we should feel if he told us who he really was). "And if he cannot make me out, you may tell him that it was an old fellow he once knew, named Hamlin. Good-by." And he drove away. The name signified little to us at the time.

"Well, whoever he is, he's an old brick!" said Halse, as the gray horse and buggy passed between the high gate-posts, at the foot of the lane.

"I think he is just splendid!" exclaimed Kate, enthusiastically.

"And he has such a great, kind heart!" said Theodora.

When Gramp and Gram came home, we were not slow in telling them that a most remarkable elderly man, named Hamlin, had called to see them, and stopped to lunch with us.

"Hamlin, Hamlin," repeated the Old Squire, absently. "What sort of looking man?"

Theodora and Ellen described him, with much zest.

"Why, Joseph, it must have been Hannibal!" cried Gram.

"So it was!" exclaimed Gramp. "Too bad we were not at home!"

"What! Not Hannibal Hamlin that was Vice-President of the United States!" Addison almost shouted.

"Yes, Vice-President Hamlin," said the Old Squire.

And about that time, it would have required nothing much heavier than a turkey's feather to bowl us all over. Addison looked at "Doad" and she looked at Ellen and me. Halse whistled.

"Why, what did you say, or do, that makes you look so queer!" cried Gram, with uneasiness. "I hope you behaved well to him. Did anything happen?"

"Oh, no, nothing much," said Ellen, laughing nervously. "Only he got the 'Jonah' pie and — and — we've had the Vice-President of the United States under the table to put our feet on!"

Gram turned very red and was much disturbed. She wanted to have a letter written that night, and try to apologize for us. But the Old Squire only laughed. "I have known Mr. Hamlin ever since he was a boy," said he. "He enjoyed that pie as well as any of them; no apology is needed."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE THRASHERS COME

TRUTH to say, farm work is never done, particularly on a New England farm where a little of everything has to be undertaken and all kinds of crops are raised, and where sheep, cattle, calves, colts, horses and poultry have to be tended and provided with winter food, indoors. A thrifty farmer has always a score of small jobs awaiting his hands.

There were now brakes to cut and dry for "bedding" at the barn, bushes and briars to clear up along the fences and walls, and stone-heaps to draw off, preparatory to "breaking up" several acres more of greensward. The Old Squire's custom was to break up three or four acres, every August, so that the turf would rot during the autumn. Potatoes were then usually planted on it the ensuing spring, to be followed the next year by corn and the next by wheat, or some other grain, when it was again seeded down in grass.

About this time, too, the beans had to be pulled and stacked; and there were always early apples to be gathered, for sale at the village stores. Sometimes, too, the corn would be ripe enough to cut up and shock by the 5th or 6th of September; and immediately after came potato-digging, always a heavy, dirty piece of farm work.

Not far from this time, "the thrashers" would make their appearance, with "horse-power," "beater" and "separator," which were set up in the west barn floor. These dusty itinerants usually remained with us for two days and threshed the grain on shares: one

bushel for every ten of wheat, rye and barley and one for every twelve of oats. There were always two of them; and for five or six years the same pair came to our barn every fall: a sturdy old man, named Dennett, and his son-in-law, Amos Moss. Dennett, himself, "tended beater" and Moss measured and "stricted" the grain as it came from the separator; — and it was hinted about among the farmers, that "Moss would bear watching."

We were kept very busy during those two days; Halse, I remember, was first set to "shake down" the wheat off a high scaffold, for Dennett to feed into the beater; while Addison and I got away the straw. I deemed it great fun at first, to see the horses travel up the lags of the horse-power incline, and hear the machine in action; but I soon found that it was suffocatingly dusty work; our nostrils and throats as well as our hair and clothing were much choked and loaded with dust.

We had been at work an hour or two, when suddenly an unusual snapping noise issued from the beater; and Dennett abruptly stopped the machine. After examining the teeth, he looked up where Halse stood on the scaffold, shaking down, and said, "Look here, young man, I want you to be more careful what you shake down here; we don't want to thrash clubs!"

"I didn't shake down clubs," said Halse.

"A pretty big stick went through anyway," remarked Dennett. "I haven't said you did it a-purpose. But I asked you to be more careful."

They went on again, for half or three-quarters of an hour, when there was another odd noise, and Dennett again stopped and looked up sharply at Halse. "Can't you see clubs as big as that?" said he. "Why, that's an old tooth out of a loafer rake. You must mind what you are about."

Halse pretended that he had seen nothing in the grain; and the machine was started again; but Addi-

son and I could see Halse at times from the place where we were at work, and noticed that he looked mischievous. Addison shook his head at him, vehemently.

Nothing further happened that forenoon; but we had not been at work for more than an hour, after dinner, when a shrill *thrip* resounded from the beater, followed by a jingling noise, and one of the short iron teeth from it flew into the roof of the barn. Again Dennett stopped the machine, hastily.

"What kind of a feller do you call yerself!" he exclaimed, looking very hard up at Halse. "You threw that stone into the beater, you know you did."

"I didn't!" protested Halse. "You can't prove I did, either."

"I'd tan your jacket for ye, ef you was my boy," muttered Dennett, wrathfully. He and Moss got wrenches from their tool-box and replaced the broken tooth with a new one. The Old Squire, who had been looking to the grain in the granary, came in and asked what the trouble was.

"Squire," said Dennett, "I want another man to shake down here for me. That's a queer Dick you've put up there."

The Old Squire spoke to Addison to get up and shake out the grain and bade Halse come down and assist me with the straw. Halse climbed down, muttering to himself. "I want to get a drink of water," he said; and as he went out past the beater, he made a saucy remark to Dennett; whereupon the latter seized a whip-stock and aimed a blow at him. Halse dodged it and ran. Dennett chased him out of the barn; and Halse took refuge in the wood-shed.

The Old Squire was at first inclined to reprove Dennett for this apparently unwarranted act; he considered that he had no right to chastise Halse. "I will attend to that part of the business, myself," he said, somewhat sharply.

"All right, Squire," said Dennett. "But I want you to understand you've got a bad boy there. Throwing stones into a beater is rough business. He might kill somebody."

Halse did not come back to help me, at once; and at length Gramp went to the house, in search of him. Ellen subsequently told me, that Halse had at first refused to come out, on the pretext that Dennett would injure him. The Old Squire assured him that he should not be hurt. Still he refused to go. Thereupon the old gentleman went in search of a horsewhip, himself; and as a net result of the proceedings, Halse made his appearance beside me, sniffing.

"I wish it had stove his old machine all to flinders and him with it," he said to me, revengefully.

"Did you throw the stone into the beater?" I asked. The machine made so much noise that I did not distinctly hear what Halse replied, but I thought that he denied doing it; and whether he actually did it, or whether the stone slid down with the grain owing to his carelessness, I never knew. Addison shook down till night; and the next day Asa Doane came to help us; for the Old Squire deemed it too hard for boys of our age to handle the grain and straw, unassisted.

In May, before I came to the farm, Addison and Halse had planted a large melon bed, in the corn field, on a spot where a heap of barnyard dressing had stood. There were both watermelons and musk-melons. These had ripened slowly during August and, by the time of the September town-meeting, were fit for eating.

The election for governor, with other State and county officers, was held on the second Monday of September in Maine.

In order to raise a little pocket money, Addison and Halstead carried their melons, also several bushels of good eating apples and pears, to the town-house at

the village, early on election day, and rigged a little "booth" for selling from. They set off by sunrise, with old Nancy harnessed in the express wagon.

As I had no part in the planting of the melons, I was not a partner in the sales, although Gramp allowed me to go to the town-meeting with him, later in the forenoon. The distance was seven miles from the farm.

The boys sold thirty melons at ten cents apiece and disposed of the most of the apples at two for a cent and pears at a cent apiece; so that the combined profits amounted to rather over seven dollars. Sales were so good, that they had disposed of their entire stock by three o'clock in the afternoon.

The polls were not closed, however, till sunset, that is to say voting could legally continue till that time. Halse had called on Addison for a division of the money, at about three o'clock, and received his share; he then told Addison that he was going home. Addison preferred to remain, to learn how the town had voted; for he was much interested in a "temperance movement" which was agitating that portion of the State that year.

The Old Squire had returned home, shortly after noon, and gone into the field to see to the digging of the potatoes. When we came in to supper, at six o'clock, Addison was just coming up the lane, on his way home.

"No doubt Williams is elected!" were his first words.

Williams was the Republican and Temperance candidate for representative to the State legislature. Addison was much elated; and after we sat down to supper, he began telling Theodora about the town-meeting; for some moments none of us noticed that one chair was empty. Then Gram said, "Where's Halstead?"

"I don't know," said the Old Squire, suddenly

glancing at the vacant seat. "Didn't he come home with you, Addison?"

"No, sir," replied Ad. "He went home afoot, a little while after you left; at any rate he said that he was going home. I haven't seen him since."

"I don't think he has come home," said Theodora. "I haven't seen him at the house."

"Well, he said he was coming home, and I gave him his part of the melon and apple money," replied Addison. "That's all I know about it."

We thought it likely that he would come during the evening, but he did not, and we all, particularly Theodora, felt much disturbed about him.

Late in the night (it seemed to me that it must be nearly morning) I was wakened by Halse coming into our room. He crept in stealthily and undressed very quietly; but sleepy as I was, I heard him first muttering and then whistling softly to himself, in what appeared to me a rather curious manner. But I did not speak to him and soon dropped asleep again.

He was sleeping heavily when I got up in the morning. I did not wake him; and I noticed that his clothes and boots were very muddy and wet, for it had rained during the latter part of the night.

When we sat down to breakfast, he had not come down-stairs; and the Old Squire went up to our room. What he learned, or what he said to Halse, we did not ascertain. At noon Gram said that Halse was not well; but he was at the supper table that night.

As I had heard about the melon money I asked him that evening, after we had gone up-stairs, if he could let me have the money which I had borrowed of Theodora and Ellen, for him. I said nothing about my own loan to him, although I wanted the money. He made me no reply; two or three nights afterwards I mentioned the matter again; for I felt responsible, after a manner, for the girls' money.

" I hain't got no money! " he snapped out, with very ungrammatical shortness.

" Oh, I thought you had three dollars and a half," I observed.

" Well, I hain't," he said, angrily.

I said no more; but after awhile, he told me that he had set off to come home from the town-house, but stopped to play at " pitching cents " with some boys at the Corners, and that while there, he had either lost the money out of his pocket, or else it had been stolen from him.

I was less inclined to doubt this story than the one about the seed corn; for I had heard rumors of gambling, in a small way, at the Corners, by a certain clique of loafers there. It was said, too, that despite the stringent " liquor law," the hustling parties were provided with intoxicants. I had little doubt that Halstead had parted with his money in some such way. I recollected how odd his behavior had been after coming home that night; and although I could scarcely believe such a thing at first, I yet began to surmise that he had been induced to drink liquor of some kind.

A few nights after town-meeting, we lost five or six boxes of honey; some rogue, or rogues, came into the garden and drew the boxes out of the hives. The only clue to the theft was boot tracks in the soft earth and these were not sufficiently distinct to avail as evidence. In a general way we attributed it to the bibulous set at the Corners. The Old Squire and Addison had incurred the displeasure of Tibbetts and his cronies, from their avowed sentiments upon the Temperance question. I do not think that Halse knew anything of the honey robbery. I asked him the next day, whether he supposed the honey boxes had gone in search of his three dollars and a half. He saw that I suspected him, and flatly denied all knowledge of it; but he added, that if Gramp and Addison did

not have less to say about rum-sellers, they might find themselves watching a big fire some night!

I asked him if he thought that Tibbetts and his crew were bad enough to set barns on fire.

"Well, isn't the old gent and Ad trying to break up Tibbetts' business, all the time!" retorted Halse.

"But do you stand up for them?" said I.

"I stand up for minding my own business and letting other folks alone!" exclaimed Halse. "And that's what the old man and Ad had better do."

"Maybe," said I, for I was not altogether clear in my mind on that point. "But they are a bad lot, out there at Tibbetts'; you say so, yourself."

"I didn't say so!" Halse exclaimed.

"Why, you told me that you thought they took your money, didn't you?" I urged.

"I said perhaps I lost it there," replied Halse in a reticent tone.

Addison believed that if Gramp would get a search warrant, a part of the honey might be found in one of two houses, at the Corners; but the Old Squire would not set the law in motion for a few boxes of honey. We young folks, however, were much exasperated over the loss of the sweets.

Two cosset lambs were also missing from our pasture at about this time; and as Addison and I drove past the Corners, on our way to the mill with another grist of corn, the day after the lambs were missed, we saw Tibbetts' dog gnawing a bone beside the road.

"Take the reins, a minute!" exclaimed Addison, pulling up. He then leaped out of the wagon with the whip, so suddenly, that the dog left the bone and ran off. Addison picked it up and examined it attentively. "It's a mutton bone, fast enough," said he. "It is one of the leg bones; the hoof is on it and there's enough of the hide to show that it was smut-legged, like ours. But of course we cannot prove much from

it," he added, throwing the bone after the dog and getting into the wagon.

On our return, we called at the Post Office which was at Tibbetts' grocery. The semi-weekly mail had come that afternoon, and quite a number of people were standing about. I went in to inquire for our folks' papers and letters; and as I came out, I saw the grocer emerging from the grocery portion of the store.

" How d'ye do, Mr. Tibbetts," cried Addison. " I'm afraid your dog has been killing two of our lambs."

" Ye don't say!" said Tibbetts. " What makes ye think so?"

" Why, I thought it might be he; I saw him gnawing the bone of a smut-legged lamb like ours," replied Addison, with every appearance of extreme candor. " Cannot say certain of course, but I feel quite sure 'twas from one of ours."

Tibbetts looked at Addison a moment, then replied, " Wal, now, if ye can prove 'twas my dog killed 'em, I'll settle with the Squire."

" I'm afraid we cannot prove it," replied Addison and drove off. — " I thought that I would blame it all on the dog," he said, laughing.

Two or three days after that, Theodora, Ellen and Kate Edwards went out to the Corners to purchase something at the store and, instead of returning by the road, came home across lots, following the brook up through the meadows. They often took that route to and from the Corners; both enjoyed going through the half-cleared land along the brook.

Beside an old log in the meadow, where evidently someone had recently sat, they picked up and brought home with them, the bottom and about half the side of one of our lost honey-boxes; bits of fresh comb were still sticking to it. The rogues who took it had manifestly sat on that log while they regaled themselves.

After dark that evening, Addison and I carried the

fragment out to Tibbetts' grocery and stuck it up on his platform. Addison also wrote on it with a blunt lead pencil, "To whom it may concern. This honey box was picked up on a direct line between the hives from which it was stolen and this place."

"Even if we cannot prove anything," he said, "I want to let them know that we've got a good idea who did it."

We thought that we had done a rather smart thing; but when the Old Squire heard of it, he told us that we had done a foolish one.

"Better let all that sort of thing alone, boys," he said. "Never hint, or insinuate charges against anybody. Never make charges at all, unless you have good proof to back you up. Tibbetts and his cronies are too old birds to care for any such small shot as that. They will only laugh at you. The less you have to say to them the better."

As Addison and I were talking over this piece of advice, later in the day, I asked him whether he believed that Tibbetts or any of his crew would set our barns afire, if the Old Squire took steps to enforce the liquor law against them.

"I guess they wouldn't dare do that," said Addison.

I then mentioned what Halse had said. Addison was greatly irritated, not so much from the covert threat implied, as to think that Halse sided against the Temperance movement.

"Now you see," said Addison, "if we do make a move against Tibbetts, Halse will be a traitor and carry word to him ahead. We shall have to watch him and never drop a word about our plans before him." He then told me, confidentially, that the Temperance sentiment had grown so strong, that its advocates hoped to be able to get Tibbetts indicted that fall and so close up his "grocery."

Addison and Theodora, as well as the Old Squire,

thought that if the Corners clique could be broken up, Halstead would be a far better boy. Liquor was the only bond which held the clique together there. If the illicit sale of liquor could be stopped at Tibbetts', not only Hannis, but several others would leave the place; and probably Tibbetts himself would move away.

I do not think that it occurred to either Addison or Theodora that there was anything in the least reprehensible in conspiring to drive grocer Tibbetts out of town. I am sure that I then deemed it a good idea to drive him away, by almost any means, fair or foul.

CHAPTER XXIV

GOING TO THE CATTLE SHOW

ABOUT this time we began to hear raccoons, in the early part of the night. There were numbers of these animals in the woods about the farm; they had their retreats in hollow trees and sometimes came into the corn fields. I first heard one while coming home from the Edwardses one evening; the strange, quavering cry frightened me; for I imagined that it was the cry of a "lucivee," concerning which the boys were talking a good deal at this time. One was said to have attacked a farmer on the highway a little beyond the Batchelder place. The animal leaped into the back part of the man's wagon and fought savagely for possession of a quarter of beef. Repeated blows from a whip-stock failed to dislodge it, till it had ridden for ten or fifteen rods, when it leaped off the wagon, but followed, growling, for some distance. As nearly as this man could judge, in the dim light of evening, the animal was as large as a good-sized dog. The "lucivee," or *loup-cervier,* is the lynx Canadensis, which ordinarily attains a weight of no more than twenty-five pounds, but occasionally grows larger and displays great fierceness and courage.

I made haste home and calling Addison out, asked him whether that strange cry which still issued at intervals from the woodland, over towards the Aunt Hannah lot, was made by the much dreaded "lucivee." He laughed and was disposed to play on my fears for a while, but at length told me that it was nothing more

savage than a 'coon. The wild note had struck a singularly responsive fiber within me; and to this day I never hear a raccoon's hollow cry at night, without a sudden recurrence of the same eerie sensation.

About this time we all became much interested in the approaching Cattle Show, which was to be held at the Fair Grounds, near the village, during the last week of September. Thomas bantered me strongly to raise two dollars and go into partnership with him in an old horse which he knew of and which he desired to buy and enter for the "slow race." The horse could be purchased for three or four dollars and was so very stiff in the knees as to be almost certain of winning the "slow race," thereby securing a "purse" of ten dollars.

What with Thomas' enthusiasm, this looked to me, at the time, to be a very alluring investment. Tom had also another scheme for winning the "purse" of the "scrub race," where every kind of animal took the track at one and the same time. The Harland boys — where we went to mill — owned a large mongrel dog that had been taught to haul a little cart. He was known to be a fast runner; and Tom had intelligence that he was in the market, at a price of two dollars. If we could secure him, there was little doubt that the scrub-race purse would easily drop into our hats. I had to confess to doubts whether the Old Squire would consent to my embarking in such speculations.

"But you needn't show in it," said Tom quietly. "I'll do all the trading and keep them over at our barn." The way being thus opened to a silent partnership, I began a canvass of all my assets.

Thomas was also intending to enter a colt and a yoke of yearling steers for the premiums on those classes of animals. Addison intended to enter one of the Old Squire's yokes of steers; and Tom acknowledged to me that his own chance was slim on steers, since ours were the larger and better-matched.

Gram usually sent in one or more firkins of butter, several cheeses and even loaves of bread and cake. The Old Squire exhibited several head of cattle and sometimes his entire herd; also sheep, hogs and poultry. Then there was always an extensive exhibit of apples, pears and grapes, arranged on plates, as also seed-corn, wheat, barley, buckwheat, oats and garden vegetables. We were occupied for fully a fortnight, that season, gathering and preparing our various exhibits.

In addition, Halstead and Addison expected to do a flourishing business selling apples, pears and grapes; they also talked of opening an eating booth on the Fair Grounds, with baked beans, cakes, pies and hot coffee; and they had agreed with Theodora and Ellen to prepare the food beforehand, and take a share in the profits. The previous fall they had sold cider (moderately sweet) and done very well; but Addison had become so rigid a temperance reformer, during the year, that he would not now deal in cider.

This being my first season at the farm, I was not included as a partner in these lucrative privileges, but expected to be admitted to them all the following year. Meantime I intended to learn about it, and expected to derive a great deal of pleasure from attending the coming exhibition. There were to be numerous "attractions," besides the slow race, and the scrub race, which was for any kind of animal that had legs and could run except horses. I had finally raised two dollars to invest with Tom in the old horse, named "Ponkus," previously alluded to, and by a hard strain on my resources also became interested to the extent of another dollar with him in "Tige," the cart dog, for the scrub race.

The Fair Grounds were located near the neighboring village, about seven miles distant from the Old Squire's, and consisted of a large wooden building and a high fence, enclosing about thirty acres of land.

The admission fee was fifteen cents. The Fair continued three days: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, of the last week of September.

We set off at four o'clock of the opening day, Addison, Halse, Thomas and I driving three ox-carts, loaded with farm products. We had also to lead "Ponkus" and a two-year-old Hereford bull behind the carts, and manage a yoke of Durham steers for the "town team;" our progress was therefore slow and it was nine o'clock in the forenoon before we arrived at the Grounds and had made a disposition of our various charges.

A great crowd of people was pouring through the gate of the enclosure. Fully four thousand people were already on the grounds; and a gaudy array of "side shows" at once attracted our attention. There were counters and carts for cider, gingerbread and confectionery. Loud-voiced auctioneers were selling "patent medicines" and knickknacks of all sorts.

Close at hand, a snare drum and fife, inside a tent, drew attention to "a rare and wonderful show of wild animals," which the fakir at the door declared to consist of "a pair of bald eagles, two panther cubs, a prairie wolf and Hindoo seal," and sometimes he said "prairie wolf and Bengal tiger."

Then there were rather disreputable fellows with "whirl-boards" at "ten cents a whirl;" with "ring-boards" at "five cents a pitch," and ten cents made when you lodged the rings on the points. There was also a blind-fold professor of phrenology, who examined heads at fifteen cents *per cranium*.

In the crowd, too, were even less reputable fellows, who sought to entrap rural youths into "betting on cards," and making "rare bargains" in delusive watches. Altogether it was an animated scene, for young eyes. Addison, Halse and Theodora were occupied with their "booth." Ellen and Wealthy were with Gram in the Fair building, where the fruit and

dairy products had to be watched and presided over. The Old Squire was a member of numerous committees on stock and other farm exhibits. We hardly caught sight of him during the day. For my own part I kept with Thomas and "Tige," whose little wagon for racing we had brought down in one of the ox-carts. We avoided the sharpers, for the good reason that we had very little money in our pockets. We were cheated but once, by a youthful Philistine who had "tumblers to break," suspended in a row by a string.

We paid him ten cents, and standing off at a distance of forty feet, threw a nicely-whittled club at the row of suspended glasses. If we broke one, we were to receive twenty-five cents. The safety of the tumblers lay in the extreme lightness of the clubs, which were of dry pine wood, much lighter than their size indicated. Tom and I each threw the clubs twice. Not a tumbler was injured. The proprietor called it a "game of skill;" but it was nearer a game of swindling.

But the slow race and scrub race were the features that interested us most. In explanation I may say that a "slow race" is not an uncommon attraction at a county fair. Usually the object in racing horses is to exhibit speed; but the "slow race" is for the slowest horse — the one which is longest in hobbling a mile. To prevent cheating, no one is allowed to drive his own horse; if he enters for the race he must drive a horse that has been entered by another person. Of course, under such conditions each man drives over the track as quickly as he can, since it is for his interest to do so. The "purse," or prize, at the Fair that fall was ten dollars; that is to say, the man who entered the slowest old skeleton of a horse, received ten dollars, together with the cheers and jeers of the crowd. Public sentiment is now more humane and wholesome.

What Thomas and I had in view was the ten dollars; and we did not believe there was a horse in the

county that could beat our old " Ponkus " at going slow.

There were no restrictions in the race. Anybody who had a horse was at liberty to enter him for it. The time set for the race was four o'clock in the afternoon. A little before that hour, Thomas drove Ponkus on to the track, in an old " thoroughbrace " wagon.

We found that as many as twelve different horses (or wrecks of horses) had been entered for the race. It was an odd and venerable-looking troop that drew up near the judge's stand, which was to be the starting point.

There was one horse with the " spring halt " in both hind legs, and he lifted his feet nearly a yard high at every step. There was another with three " spavins " and a " ring-bone " on the remaining leg. Still another had the " heaves " so badly that its breathing could be heard twenty rods away. In fact, every one had some ailment or defect. The agents of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals had not yet made their way into our locality.

The owners surveyed the rival nags with a critical eye. The bystanders laughed and made bets. The horse with the " spring halt," that lifted both hind legs so high, was the popular favorite at first. But soon a fresh roar from the crowd told of the approach of another " racer."

A tin-peddler, with his cart and great bags of paper-rags on top, came in. The first glimpse of the peddler's horse sent dismay to the rest of us. Besides being utterly stiff-kneed and knock-kneed, it was really nothing but a moving skeleton. Its hair looked as dead as that on a South American cow-hide, and nearly every bone in its frame might have been counted.

The crowd shouted, " Room! Room there! Room for old Rack-o'-bones! Don't breathe or he'll tumble down! Is he balky? Will he kick? Check him up! "

The peddler had been passing the Fair Grounds on his way through the county, when some wag had hailed him and induced him to enter his horse for the race. He was a little wiry man forty or fifty years old, dressed in a soiled tweed coat and a boy's cloth cap.

He wanted to drive his horse, harnessed as it was in the tin-cart; but the rest of us cried out against it; he therefore took the cart off the forward wheels, and strapped a salt-box to the axle, to sit on. It was a queer sort of "sulky." There was not much to choose, however; all the horses were in rickety wagons, or battered gigs.

The drivers "changed over." They then got the animals as nearly in line at the bar as possible, ready for the word "Go." Just then it was discovered that one of the horses had a sharp stone adroitly inserted in his shoe, so as to press up against the "frog" of his foot, and still further cripple the poor beast. The judges promptly excluded this horse, and reprimanded his owner.

"Go!" was then shouted. And they went. The crowd whooped and cheered and whistled. Such a strident chorus of "Get-daps," "Geh-langs," "Hud-dups!" and such frantic efforts to get those horses into a trot were never before seen or heard in those parts! Each jostled and ran against others in his wild efforts to get past his neighbors and rivals. One gig broke down, and the driver had to mount on horseback; but he went the better for that, and got past all the rest. Altogether, it was the noisiest, dustiest, most harum-scarum race that can be imagined! They got around at last, the most of them, and began to look about. The peddler's horse was not to be seen.

"Where's Rack-o'-bones?" we asked each other. The shouts and gesticulations of the spectators soon told us as to his whereabouts. The peddler's horse had not yet got *half way round!* A snail could have

crawled almost as fast. The animal could not step more than six inches at once, to save its life.

The most amusing part of it to the crowd was that the little peddler did not understand about the race, and thought that instead of winning he was hopelessly beaten. It took the judges some minutes to make him comprehend that he had won the race. His small, greedy, gray eyes shone when he was given the ten dollars.

"Don't envy him, boys," said one of the judges. "The man is entitled to the pity of the entire assemblage for owning or using such a horse."

The slow race came off the first day; but our folks attended the Fair, not only upon the following day, which was the principal day, but on the third day also. We did not reach home at night till eight or nine o'clock, and were astir and off again by five o'clock next morning; for we had our stock at the Fair Grounds to look after. Gram had hired Aunt Olive Witham to stay at the farm that week and keep house; and she not only kept house, but kept the barn as well, and did all the milking for us.

On the second day came the *bona fide* horse trots, of great interest to all owning horses troubled with that dangerous disease — speed.

On the third and last day, a young fellow with a cageful of dancing turkeys divided public attention about equally with a white-haired and long-bearded man from Newfoundland who "ate glass tumblers," biting off and chewing up great mouthfuls of glass, as if it were a crust of bread. Afterwards this same old Blue-nose fought with his own large Newfoundland dog, using only his mouth, growling and snapping in such a frightful way that it was hard telling which brute was the dog. But the final and most exciting feature of the day, was the "scrub race," which came off at four o'clock in the afternoon.

In this race any and every animal was allowed to

take part, except horses. Men, boys, dogs harnessed into carts and carrying their owners, cows, steers and goats, anything on four legs or two, could compete except the genus *equus*. The prize was ten dollars to the winner, meaning he, she or it, that first reached the judge's stand. An extra rail had been put up in the fence enclosing the race-course, to keep the contestants on the track and out of the crowd.

Among the competitors were three men and about a dozen boys. The interest of the spectators, however, centered on the four-footed "racers." Among these was a little black and white Canadian cow, with fawn-colored legs and slim black-tipped horns. This creature was the property of a Frenchman, who could speak scarcely a word of English. She was harnessed, like a horse, and dragged an old pair of wheels. *Jinnay,* as her owner called her, galloped over the track at an astonishing speed.

Then there was a boy with a stub-tailed, brindled bull-dog. The dog was harnessed into a little four-wheeled wagon, just big enough for the driver to sit in. Another lad, in a two-wheeled cart, drove a great, curly, shaggy Newfoundland dog. And still another boy drove a small, stocky, reddish-yellow dog, of no particular breed. This latter dog had erect, prick ears, and a very surly expression of countenance. His tail was apparently as straight and stiff as a file. He answered to the name of Gub, and his master to that of Jimmy Stirks.

Then there was an old man with a large, mouse-colored jackass, and another man with a mule. The mule, however, was ruled out by the judges, on the ground that he had "horse-blood" in him.

All in good time Tom drove in with our "Tige."

At the word "Go" from the judges, there was a mad scratch for it. Men, boys, dogs, cows and donkey started over the course, in most laughable confusion. Tige barked from pure delight at the

uproar, as he dashed on, swinging his great bushy tail.

The Frenchman with his cow was the popular favorite. Above all the din of the race, the voice of the little Canadian could be heard screaming, *"Mush daw! Mush daw!"* as he plied his stick, and sometimes, *"Herret, Jinnay! Herret, twa sacre petite broot!"* In the height of the confusion, the jackass brayed. That was the final touch of fun for the crowd.

Tige might have won, if he had attended to his business; but his delight seemed to be in barking, and chasing Jinnay. The little yellow "chunked" dog, with the prick ears, on the contrary, never turned to right or left, but shot like an arrow straight for his mark. How those little cart-wheels did buzz! And he won the race by eight or ten rods, leaving men, boys, and Jinnay behind. His owner was a proud boy that afternoon, and a "great man" among his fellows; but Tom and I were somewhat depressed.

Addison took a premium with his yoke of yearling Durham steers, much to the chagrin of Alfred Batchelder who had also entered a pair for the prize. Alfred so far lost his temper as to talk outrageously to Addison upon their way home, on the evening of the third day of the Fair, after the awards had been announced. He alleged that the Old Squire, being on the stock "committees," had given Addison the premium, unjustly. For he thought (although no one else did) that his steers were the best on the grounds. The charge was a baseless one; for the Old Squire was not a member of the committee on steers that year, but only on oxen and horses.

A ridiculous accident happened as the people were coming home from the Fair that third night. There was a great deal to be drawn home; and consequently a very long procession of carts and wagons was toiling along the road, toward nightfall; also the cows and other cattle which had been on exhibition. The

Edwards family, the Wilburs, as also the Sylvesters and the Batchelders, were well represented; and not only those from our immediate neighborhood, but others from various places more remote. All were journeying homeward along the highway beside the lake; not less than forty teams all told, loaded with every variety of farm produce, also the farmers' wives and children.

It was very dusty, and horse teams were constantly driving past the slower ox-carts, for some of the young fellows and a few of the older ones were quite ready to show off the paces of their nags. After this manner they went on, with here and there two or three teams cutting in ahead of the slower ones, till the forward teams reached "Wilkins Hill," a long, and in some places, quite steep ascent in the road about two miles from the Old Squire's.

Near the top of the hill Roscoe Batchelder — an older brother of Alfred — who owned a "fast horse" and had been driving past most of the other teams on the way home, overtook Willis Murch with his ox-team, consisting of a yoke of oxen and a yoke of two-year-old steers. Willis had started quite early from the Fair Grounds and hence, although driving slowly, had secured a long start of the others. Just at the top of the hill, Roscoe, with a cigar in his mouth, whipped up to drive past Willis, and feeling fine from some cause or other, cracked his whip at the steers and gave a wild yell as he dashed past!

This startled the steers, unused to the excitements of the road; they sprang forward with a jerk which somehow threw out or broke the pin through the "sword" at the forward end of the cart body. With that the cart tipped up, dumping the entire load into the road behind. Among other farm produce in the cart were eight or ten huge yellow pumpkins. At the Murch farm they always raised fine pumpkins and generally carried a few large ones to the Fair. They

cultivated a kind of cheese-shaped pumpkins which often grew two feet in diameter, yellow as old gold.

When these great pumpkins were tipped out they began to roll down the hill. Immediately there arose a shout of trouble and dismay from the teamsters below. Something very much like a stampede ensued; for the pumpkins came bounding under the horses and oxen. One cart ran into the ditch and upset. Alfred Batchelder's prize steers ran away and caught the hook of a chain which they were dragging, into the wheel of a wagon belonging to the Sylvesters, and upset it. There was a wreck of all the jelly and other prepared fruits and preserves in it, Mrs. Sylvester being somewhat noted for her skill in these particulars. It was said that the greatly grieved woman shed bitter tears, then and there.

Addison was driving our wagon home and had Gram and all the girls in it. He was pretty well down toward the foot of the hill and hearing the outcry farther up, jumped out and seized old Sol by the head, to keep him from bolting. In consequence of this prudent manœuver our folks came through the tumult uninjured and without damage. One pumpkin came rolling directly down toward Addison; but by a dextrous kick he turned it aside.

Halstead and I, who were driving oxen and carts, did not fare quite as well; for the team in advance, belonging to the Edwardses, backed down into us, and our cattle, running out into the ditch, spilled a part of our loads, including our exhibits of apples and vegetables. Our case, however, was not as bad as many of our neighbors, some of whom met with considerable loss. We were occupied an hour or two gathering up the spilled loads.

So much for a youngster with a cigar in his mouth and a glass or two of beer inside him. If an indignant community could have laid hands on Roscoe Batchelder that night, he would have fared badly.

Addison and Halse had done a tolerable business with their cake, coffee and fruit stand. They cleared about seven dollars each above expenses; and Theodora and Ellen received four dollars apiece for their services as cooks. I was about the only one in the family who had not received something in the way of premiums and profits. Both my ventures, in the " slow race " and the " scrub race," had collapsed. The Old Squire laughed at me when he heard of my efforts to capture prizes, and advised me to try more creditable schemes in future.

CHAPTER XXV

THE WILD ROSE SWEETING

STILL another memory goes with that first Cattle Show in Maine — the Wild Rose Sweeting.

Afterwards I came to know that delicious apple well; but it was at the Fair that I first made its acquaintance. Willis Murch was peddling them, and made the place resound, not unmusically, with cries of "Wild Rose Sweetings! Straight from the Garden of Eden! The best apple that ever grew! Only a few left!" — and he was actually asking (and getting) four cents apiece for them.

In some astonishment I drew up to him to see what it could be in the way of an apple to command such a price and be in such evident demand. They were truly lovely apples to look at, but noticing that I was still skeptical as to their exceeding merits, Willis kindly gave me one — by way of removing all doubts. Truth to say, those doubts were at once removed.

The Wild Rose Sweeting, indeed, is really worthy of a biography, its history was so romantic, its fate so sad. Let me try to be its humble biographer.

As a rule apple-trees that come up wild, bear fruit that is either sour or else bitter-sweet. All such trees need to be budded, or grafted and cultivated, to be of value to man. It is only once in a million times that a really good apple comes up as natural fruit.

The value to the world of such a choice apple may be enormous. The Baldwin, for example, which first appeared growing wild in a Massachusetts town, could hardly be reckoned to-day as worth less than a hundred

millions of dollars. We can bud, graft, cultivate and do much to improve existent apples; but it is only by chance that we propagate a new one that is really good.

The Wild Rose Sweeting was named by Miss Alice Linderman, a young lady from Philadelphia, who had come to our northern hill country several years previously in the vain hope of recovery from advanced pulmonary disease. She named it from the wild-rose tint on one cheek of the apple.

The tree was discovered by Willis, who kept the secret of it to himself as long as he could, for his own behoof. He was sufficiently generous to give some of the apples to Miss Linderman, but he demanded a cent apiece from others. He even asked four cents apiece after the fame of the apples spread abroad.

The year after he discovered the tree Willis carried a bushel to the county fair, and began peddling them at a cent apiece. Nearly every one who bought an apple came back for more. Willis raised the price to three and four cents. Presently a gentleman who had bought two came back and took the last ten in the basket at a dollar!

This fact shows better than any description could what a really luscious apple it was. There was that in the flavor of it that impelled people to get more.

The Wild Rose Sweeting more nearly resembled the Sweet Harvey than any other apple to which I can liken it. The flavor was like that of the Sweet Harvey thrice refined, perhaps rather more like the August or Pear Sweeting; and it melted on the palate like a spoonful of ice-cream.

It will not seem strange to those who know something of the " apple-belt " of New England that apple-trees, even good ones, should be discovered growing wild in back pastures and secluded openings in the woods.

Oxford County, Maine, abounds in wild apple-trees.

By looking about a little, the farmer there can readily pick up enough young trees, growing wild, to set an orchard. They spring up everywhere. For this is one of the world's natural apple regions. North and northeast of the Old Squire's farm rose wooded hills; and extending back among them was a valley, down which ran a brook, abounding in trout-holes at the foot of ledges and large rocks.

At one time the land here was cleared, but being stony and rough it had been used for pasture, and was partly overgrown with bushes. There were thousands of young wild apple-trees here, scrubby and thorny, where cattle had browsed them.

The boys often went fishing in this brook, spring, summer and fall. Far up the valley, at a point where the brook flowed over a ledge, there was a well-known hole. Willis Murch was fishing here one afternoon in the latter part of August, when he saw a red squirrel carrying an apple in its mouth by the stem, and coming out from some thick young hemlocks that grew along the west bank of the brook. He was sitting so still that the squirrel ran close up to him; but when he suddenly thrust out his hand, the animal dropped the apple and scudded away with a shrill *chicker*.

The apple rolled close to Willis's feet, and he picked it up. Apples were common enough, but this one looked so good that he rubbed it on his sleeve and bit it. Then his eyes opened in surprise, for this was no sour cider-apple, but far and away the best apple he had ever tasted.

"It must grow near here," he said to himself, looking curiously around. "That squirrel didn't bring it far. The stem is fresh, too. He has just gnawed it off the tree."

Thereupon Willis began searching. He crept into the hemlocks on hands and knees. Presently he came upon several other gnawed apples; but even with this clue, he was half an hour finding the tree. There were

four or five huge rocks back from the brook among the thick hemlocks. At last he crawled in past two of these that stood close together, and came upon the apple-tree, in a little sheltered amphitheater. It was at the foot of another large rock, twelve or fifteen feet high. A tiny spring oozed out at the foot of the rock; and here this apple-tree had grown up, unwatched and undiscovered save by the squirrels and birds. The tree was a thrifty one. The trunk had attained a diameter of six inches; and when Willis found it, there were, he says, four or five bushels of those delicious Sweetings, now just beginning to ripen. Willis first ate all he desired, then took off his coat, made a bag of it, and shook down the ripest of the apples to carry home to his family and the neighboring boys and girls.

"Won't they smack their lips!" he said to himself. "Won't they be up here for more!"

But on the way he took second thought, and craft entered his heart. "I won't tell them where it is," he said to himself. "Let them hunt. They never will find it." For the place was a mile and a half or two miles from the nearest farm.

Willis as yet had not thought of selling the apples or making a profit from his discovery; that idea came into his mind later, after he found how fond every one was of them. But that night when asked where this tree grew, Willis laughed and said darkly, "Oh, I know!"

Such secretiveness was deemed piggish, and was resented. Several declared that they could and would find that tree and get every apple on it. Willis laughed and said, "Let me know when you do."

That was the beginning of the long search for "Willis Murch's good tree." First and last, hours, days and, altogether, weeks of time were spent scouring the pastures, fields and clearings. Willis was watched constantly, in the hope of tracking him.

Alfred Batchelder lay in wait for days together on a hill overlooking the Murch farm, expecting to see Willis set out for the tree. At one time Alfred and another boy, named Charles Cross, had thoughts of waylaying Willis, and extorting the secret from him by threats or torture!

Willis steered clear of them, however, and remained close-mouthed. He had grown very crafty, and went to the tree by night only, or sometimes early on Sunday mornings, before other people were astir.

During the August moon of the second season after discovering the tree, he brought home a bushel of the apples on three different occasions by night; and he now began canvassing among the farmers who had orchards, to sell scions, to be delivered in May of the following spring. After eating the apples, not a few signed for them at fifty cents a graft.

It required a fair share of courage on the part of a boy of fifteen to go to the tree by night, for the distance from Willis's home was fully two miles; and at that time bears and lynxes frequented the "great pasture."

Willis afterward told the other boys that a bear came out in the path directly ahead of him one night, as he was hurrying home with a bushel of Wild Rose Sweetings on his shoulder. The creature sniffed, and Willis shouted to frighten it. He was on the point of throwing down his apples, to climb a tree in haste, when the bear shambled away.

Willis seems now to have had great designs of selling scions to orchardists and nurserymen over the whole country. Only a tiny twig, three inches long, is requisite for a scion for grafting into other trees. The Wild Rose Sweeting tree would produce thousands of such scions. Willis, who was a Yankee lad by ancestry, resolved to preserve the secret of the tree at all hazards. He appears to have had dreams of making a fortune from it.

Thus far no one had been able to find the tree, as much from nature's own precaution in hiding it as from Willis's craft. By the middle of September that autumn he had gathered most of the apples, when the same chance which had first led his steps to the tree revealed it to the eyes of his enemies.

For about that time Alfred Batchelder and Charles Cross's brother, Newman, went fishing up the brook, and in due course arrived at the trout-hole where Willis had sat when he saw the squirrel. They crept up to the hole, baited and cast in together.

There were no bites immediately; but as they sat there they heard a red squirrel *chirr!* up among the thick hemlocks, and presently caught the sound of a low thud on the ground, soon followed by another and another.

"He's gnawing off apples," said Alfred. "There's an apple-tree among those hemlocks."

Then the two cronies glanced at each other, and the same thought occurred to both. "Who knows!" exclaimed Newman. "Who knows but what that may be the tree?"

They stopped fishing and began searching. They could still hear the squirrel in the apple-tree, and the sounds guided them to the little dell among the rocks. There were a few apples remaining on the tree; and they no sooner saw them than they knew that Willis Murch's famous tree was found at last.

They were so greatly pleased that they hurrahed and whooped for joy. Then they secured what apples there were left, ate all they wanted, and filled their pockets with the rest. No more fishing for them that day. They had found the famous tree, and now were intent on thinking how they could most humiliate Willis.

Neither of them knew of his grand scheme to sell scions; but it had long provoked their envy to see him peddling Wild Rose Sweetings at the Fair for four

cents apiece. They would find him now and thrust a pink-cheeked apple under his nose!

But that would not be half satisfaction enough. They wanted to cut him off from his tree forever, to put it out of his power ever to get another apple from it. Nothing less would appease the grudge they bore him.

And what those two malicious youths did was to take their jack-knives and girdle that Wild Rose Sweeting tree close to the ground. They went clear round the tree, cutting away the bark into the sap-wood; and not content with girdling it once, they went round it three times in different places.

That done, they went home in great glee, thrust the apples in Willis's face, and bade him look to his good tree.

"We have found your tree, old Cuffy!" they cried to him. "You never will get any more apples off that tree!"

Beyond doubt Willis was chagrined. He did not know that they had girdled the tree, but he thought it not worth the while to go up there again that fall, since there were no more apples. Yet even if Alfred and Newman had found it, and even if they got the apples next season, he supposed that he would still be able to cut scions from the tree. Late in March, directly after the sap started, he went up there with knife and saw to secure them.

Not till then did he discover that the tree had been cruelly girdled, and that the spring sap had not flowed to the limbs. He cut a bundle of scions, some of which were afterward set as grafts; but none of them lived. The tree was killed. It never bore again. Nor can I learn that sprouts ever came up about the root. It was quite dead when I first visited the place.

Thus perished, untimely, the Wild Rose Sweeting. Ignorance and small malice robbed the world of an

apple that might have given delight and benefit to millions of people for centuries to come.

I have sometimes thought that an inscription of the nature of an epitaph should be cut on the great rock at the foot of which the tree stood.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE OLD SQUIRE ALLOWS US FOUR DAYS FOR CAMPING OUT

SO occupied were our minds with the Fair and its incidents, that not one of us had thought to go or send to the post office during that entire week. We had even passed near it, without thinking to call.

But on Sunday morning the Old Squire suddenly bethought himself of his religious newspaper, *The Independent,* which he commonly read for an hour after breakfast. He called me aside and, after remarking that he did not make a practice of going, or sending, to the post office on the Sabbath, said that I might make a trip to the Corners and bring home the mail. As the post office was at the residence of the postmaster, letters and papers could be taken from the office on any day or hour of the week.

I went to the Corners, accordingly, and at the door of the post office met Catherine Edwards who had also come there on a similar errand.

She looked very bright and smart that morning and laughed when she saw me.

"Your folks forgot the mail, too," said she. "Father told me to go down across the meadow, so that the Old Squire's folks needn't see me, going to the post office; for you know father stands in great awe of your grandpa's opinions. I shall tell him when I get home that he needn't have been so cautious."

Kate did not hasten away; and I summoned courage to say, "Please wait for me," although it cost me a great effort.

"All right," she replied. "I'll go on slow."

The postmaster had again to look up his glasses and was, I thought, a long while peering at the letters and papers. At length he handed out my package and I hurried away. Kate had not proceeded very far, however, and I soon overtook her. But she was obliged to take the lead in conversation.

"Our school doesn't begin this winter till after Thanksgiving," she remarked. "Have your folks heard who the schoolmaster is going to be?"

We had not.

"Well then, it is a young man, named Samuel Lurvy," said Kate. "He lives at Lurvy's Mills; and they say that his father, who owns the mills, has sent him for three terms to the Academy. Mr. Batchelder is our district school agent, you know; and his wife is a relative of the Lurvys; that's the reason, father says, that he came to hire Sam. Our folks are a little surprised and so are the Wilburs; for this Sam isn't more than nineteen or twenty years old; and mother says that she doesn't believe that he can be a very good scholar, for his parents are very ignorant.

"I was in hopes that they would have a good teacher this winter; for I want to make a start in Algebra," Kate continued. "I suppose you are nicely along in your studies. They must have better schools at Philadelphia than we do, away back here in the country."

It appeared, however, that whatever advantages I might have had in this respect, I was yet not as far advanced in Arithmetic as Kate; nor yet in any other branch. I had barely reached Compound Interest, while Kate had finished her Practical Arithmetic the previous winter.

"I could do all the examples in it when school was done last winter," she said. "I reviewed it once this summer, under Miss Emmons; I think like as not I might trip on some of them now. But I know that

Theodora can do them all. She is a little older than I am; and she is a real good scholar, though I don't think that she is quite so good as Addison. He is different, somehow; he knows lots about everything and can talk real interesting with the teachers, in the classes. I know he is hoping we will have a good teacher, so he can finish up all his common school studies. You tell him that we are going to have Sam Lurvy, and see what he thinks about it.

"But it will be a long time before school begins," Kate continued, "nearly two months. We only have about nineteen weeks of school in a year here."

By this time we had reached the meadow where the bridge spanned the meadow brook.

"Go easy on the bridge and look off the lower end of it," Kate advised. "We may see a big trout."

We did so and saw several trout, swimming away, but not very large ones.

"Well, I guess I shall go up the meadow and across the fields home," remarked Kate. "It is nearer for me; and it is a little nearer for you; but perhaps you would rather go by the road, seeing it is Sunday."

"I had rather go with you up the meadow," I said, but I felt somewhat abashed; and it seemed to me very bold to take such a long walk through meadow, pasture and fields, with a girl, alone, of about my own age, and not a cousin.

We proceeded up the meadow, following the meanderings of the brook, past numerous bush clumps. At length, we drew near a large bend where the brook looked to be both wide and deep. "This is the best trout hole on the meadow," Kate told me in a low tone. "Just wait a moment and keep back out of sight, while I catch a grasshopper." She hunted about in the dry grass, alternately stealing forward on tip-toe, then making a quick dash and pressing her hand suddenly on the grass. "I've got two," she said, coming cautiously forward. "Now creep up still to

that little bunch of basswood bushes, on the edge of the bank. Get down low and crawl and don't jar the ground. I'm going to throw in a grasshopper. Oh dear me, look at the 'molasses' the nasty thing has put on my hand!"

Kate threw the grasshopper into the pool at the bend; and it seemed to me that it had barely touched the water, when *flop* rose a fine trout and snatched it.

"Oh, if it wasn't Sunday and we had a hook here to put this other grasshopper on," said Kate eagerly, "wouldn't it be fun to haul that trout out here!

"I caught ten here one day last June," she continued. "Oh, I *do* love to fish! — Do you think it is very horrid for girls to fish?" she asked suddenly.

"Girls don't fish as much as boys, but I didn't know there was any harm in it," I said.

"I'm glad you don't think it isn't nice," said Kate. "Tom is always hectoring me about it. I sometimes catch more than he does; and I think that is the reason he wants to plague me."

"But we must go away from here!" Kate exclaimed. "For I don't think it is quite right to want to fish so badly, on Sunday. I think it is as bad to want to catch a fish as to catch one, or almost as bad."

This being our moral condition, we veered off from the brook a little; and Kate pointed out to me a bank of choke-cherry bushes, from which we gathered a few cherries, not very good ones.

"It isn't a good cherry year," said Kate. "Last year was. We got splendid ones off these same bushes, last September."

Kate also pointed out to me some small bird pear trees, growing beside an old hedge fence across the upper end of the meadow, where we climbed over and going through a tract of sparse woodland entered the pasture below the Old Squire's south field.

"Oh, I do love to be out in the woods and pastures on a bright pleasant day like this!" exclaimed Kate,

with a long breath of enjoyment. "I wish I could camp out and be out of doors all the fall. That makes me think, has Addison or Dora said anything to you about our making a trip to the 'great woods' this fall, after the apples are picked?"

"I have heard Addison say that he would like to go," said I. "And Theodora said that they had talked of making a camping trip once. But I haven't heard anything about it lately."

"Oh dear, I'm afraid they will all give it up," said Kate. "There is a place away up in the woods where there is a nice chance to camp. Tom was up there once. It is quite a good ways. We should have to camp out over night. Wouldn't that be fun? There's a brook up there full of fish, they say; and there are partridges and lots of game. My folks will let Tom and me go, if Theodora and Ellen and Addison go. Mother thinks Dora is the nicest girl there ever was about here; she holds her up as a pattern for me, regularly. But I happen to know that Dora enjoys having a good time, as much as I do.

"Now you put them up to go," Kate added, as we came to the west field bars, where our ways homeward diverged. "Good-by. I've had a real nice walk."

It was certainly very polite for her to say that; for she had been obliged to do nearly all the talking.

Addison and Theodora were standing out near the bee hives and saw me coming across the field to the house. A great and embarrassing fear fell upon me, as I saw them observing my approach. Even now, Catherine was still in sight, at a distance, crossing Mr. Edwards' field. My two cousins had been waiting about for me to bring *The Portland Transcript* and *The Boston Weekly Journal*, which they read very constantly in those days.

"Aha! aha!" exclaimed Addison, significantly. "Seems to me that you have been gone a long time after the mail!"

"And who is that young lady we saw you taking leave of, over at the bars?" put in Theodora.

A very small hole would have sufficed for me to creep into at about that time!

"See how red he is," hectored Addison. "We've found him out. I had no idea he was any such boy as this!"

"Dear me, no," said Theodora, pretending to be vastly scandalized. "Just see how bold he behaves! I never would have thought it of him!" Thus they tormented me, winking confidentially to each other; and an eel being skinned alive for the frying-pan would not have suffered more than I did from their gibes.

For a number of days after the Fair, we found it difficult to settle down to farm work, so greatly had it interrupted the ordinary course of events. When we did get to work again, our first task was to pick the winter apples, the Baldwins and Greenings, and barrel them, for market. Gramp did not allow these apples to be shaken off the trees; they must all be hand-picked, then carefully sorted up and the first layers placed in the barrels in rows around the bottom. Baldwins and Greenings, thus barrelled, will keep sound till the following March; but if care be not used and apples which have fallen from the trees be put in, the barrel of fruit may wholly decay before February.

It was pleasant, but tiresome work, climbing to the top of the great trees, holding on with one hand and picking apples with the other. We were well provided with "horses," ladders and hooks, however, and in four days, picked and put up one hundred and thirty barrels. Lest some farmer's son well versed in this kind of work, be inclined to think my story large, I may explain that there were six of us, including the two Doanes and the Old Squire; and I must also add that the girls helped us at the sorting and barrelling.

The fact was, that we were all working with good

will; for Addison had taken opportunity to ask the Old Squire and Gram about making that excursion to the "great woods;" and although the latter had not yet consented to allow Theodora and Ellen to go, Gramp had said that we boys might have four days, after the apples were picked. Addison had told me about it, but had said nothing to Halstead, for he had expressly stipulated with the old gentleman, that Halse should not be allowed to accompany us.

Addison's plan to exclude Halse disturbed Theodora, however; she thought it was wrong to treat him in that manner, even if we did not like his ways. Addison, however, declared that we would be sure to have trouble, if Halstead went, he was so headstrong and bad-tempered. We had several very earnest private discussions of the matter. Addison would not yield the point; he would as lief not go, he said, as to go with Halse.

Thomas and Catherine Edwards, and Willis Murch, had been advised of the proposed expedition and asked to go. We should thus make a party of seven, Addison urged, and would have a fine time; for the Edwards young folks and Willis were good-tempered and intelligent, with tastes much like our own. Ned Wilbur had been invited, but declined, having to choose between this trip and a long promised visit to some friends, in another county.

The matter was pending all the time we were gathering apples. Theodora even argued for Halstead with Gramp; but Addison stood in well with the old gentleman; he declared that he wished and needed to take a gun with us, and that he, for one, did not dare go out with Halse, if the latter had a gun; nor did he believe that any of us would be safe, if Halse had the handling of one.

Unfortunately there was only too much truth in this latter argument. Theodora then urged that Halse might be allowed to go and made to promise in ad-

vance not to take up the gun at all while we were gone. Addison retorted that those might trust his promises who wished, but that he would not.

Wealthy, whom grandmother judged too young to go, at length told Halstead of the proposed trip and informed him that he, at least, would have to stay at home with her. Thereupon Halstead began to question me in our room at night about the trip. I told him bluntly that Gramp did not think it prudent for him to go, lest he should make trouble.

"So I've got to stay at home and work!" he exclaimed bitterly.

"Well, you might behave better when you are out, then," I said. "It's your own fault."

"What have I done?" he exclaimed.

"Picked a quarrel with 'Enoch' on Fourth o' July," said I, to refresh his memory.

"I don't care; he stoned me!" Halse exclaimed.

"But you began the fuss," I put in.

"Oh, you say that because Ad does. You and he are about alike!" cried Halse, angrily.

"Then there was town-meeting night," I went on to say. "I think you came home intoxicated that night; I think you had been gambling, too."

"You say that again and I'll thrash you!" exclaimed Halse, now very hot.

"Well, I think so, or I shouldn't say it," I repeated.

In an instant Halse was upon me, as I sat on the side of our bed, and there was an unseemly scuffle. Halse was the larger, and I think that I would have gotten the worst of the squabble, but at this juncture, Addison, hearing the racket, rushed in from his room and pulled us apart.

"Who began this row?" quoth our separator.

"I did, and I'll thrash him!" shouted Halse. "He said I was drunk town-meeting night."

"Well, you were," said Addison. "We all know that."

Halse then tried to throw a boot at Addison who set him down violently in a chair.

" Do you know what I would do with you, if I were in the Old Squire's place? " cried Addison. " I would put you at the Reform School, you little rowdy! "

Up jumped Halse to seize the other boot to throw, but was set down again, this time so hard that the whole room shook. He sat panting a moment, then began to whimper. Theodora came to the door.

" Oh, boys," said she in a low voice, " please don't. Do try not to disturb Gramp to-night; he is very tired and has just gone to bed."

I suppose that we all felt ashamed of ourselves. I did; for I knew that I had been somewhat to blame, to provoke Halstead so far. We fell asleep in anything but a kindly mood toward each other; I had remained awake till Halse was snoring, being a little afraid of him, to tell the truth. Even after he was asleep, he kept starting and muttering, he had become so much excited.

But for this incident I think that Theodora would have won her way, and Halse would have been invited to go; she was very persevering, to carry her point, when she thought a thing was right.

But now we were so embittered that Halstead declared next morning he would not go with us, if we asked him.

" But you will all be sorry for this before you get back! " he blurted out; — words which made me feel uneasy, for they seemed to imply a threat of some sort. I said nothing about it, however, not believing that he really would do anything.

That afternoon we finished picking the apples; and the Old Squire said that the hired men could gather up those on the ground, for home use, subsequently. Since we were going on a trip, he thought that we had better go at once, before the weather turned colder. The fact was, that Ad had succeeded in interesting

Gramp in the trip. The old gentleman owned a number of lots of wild land, up in the "great woods." There had been stories that there was silver in some of the mountains there; Addison often talked about finding mines; and as he already knew quite a good deal about the different kinds of rocks and ores, the Old Squire thought that he might possibly discover something of value.

That evening we were busy with our preparations for the trip; and I do not remember seeing Halstead at all; Catherine and Tom Edwards came over, and Willis Murch a little later, to ask about taking his gun. Addison thought that one gun would be enough to carry; for we found out, as every camping party does, that our luggage would prove burdensome and must be reduced to the least possible weight. We wanted to take, in addition to four "comforters" and two blankets, only what things we could pack in two common bushel baskets which are convenient to carry, either on one's shoulder, or for two persons where one lends a hand at either ear of the basket. In one basket we packed our tinware, frying-pan, tin dippers, plates, etc., along with four or five loaves of bread, sugar, coffee, salt, pepper, etc., and four dozen eggs. In the other was stowed potatoes, pork, a little bag of coarse corn meal for mush, butter and a score other little articles that are often forgotten at the start and sadly missed later on. Finally on top of each basket was strapped the comforters and blankets.

It being past the middle of October, when frosty nights might be expected, we all wore thick winter clothing and strong boots.

Gram had at last consented to allow Ellen and Theodora to go, although it must be said that such a jaunt was not at all to the dear old lady's taste, and violated many of her traditions of what girls should do.

There were none too many hours passed in sleep by any of us that night, I feel sure; for we did not finish

our preparations and packing, till towards midnight; and Addison waked us promptly at five o'clock. When he came to my door to call me, Halse waked up and lay scowling, as I dressed by the light of a candle. "You feel mighty smart, don't ye?" he said at length. I did not blame him much for being out of sorts, and so did not reply.

"I hope it will rain every day you are gone!" he exclaimed. "I hope the 'Cannucks' will rob ye!"

There were rumors concerning parties of Canadian outlaws that were thought to infest the "great woods," or at least to pass through it and rendezvous somewhere in its recesses, on their way to and from Canada. Hence the name of Cannucks.

CHAPTER XXVII

AT THE OLD SLAVE'S FARM

WE had breakfast at six; and then Asa Doane hitched up old Sol and Nancy to the farm wagon on which we loaded our outfit and set off to take up our friends, Thomas and Kate, also Willis Murch. We were to have four days, five, including Sunday (for this was Thursday); Gramp expressly stipulated, however, that we should remain quiet in our camp over the Sabbath.

"Now, boys," said the old gentleman, coming out to see us off, "be prudent and careful, avoid rash encounters with man or beast.

"Addison," he continued in a lower voice, "I shall expect you to see that everything goes right."

Gram's instructions to the girls had been given already and many times repeated. We drove off in high spirits; and the old folks stood looking after us. Happening to cast a glance to the upper windows of the house, I saw Halstead's face, with so black a frown on it, that I experienced a sudden foreboding.

But the beauty of the early autumnal morning, and the exaltation which we all felt at starting out for a holiday, soon dispelled other thoughts.

We had, as I now think, done wrong to exclude Halse; but it was a choice of evils. His disposition was so peculiar, that we should most likely have had trouble, if he had gone with us; and yet in leaving him behind, we were prompting him to some bad act on account of the slight.

Thomas and Kate were waiting for us by the road-

side and, after a joyous greeting, climbed into the wagon; we then drove on to take up Willis, whom we found equally on the alert. Each made contributions to the common stock of provisions and outfit.

Half a mile above the Murch farm, the road entered the borders of the "great woods," and immediately became little better than a trail, rather rough and bushy; yet a well-marked track extended for five miles into the forest, as far as Clear Pond from the shores of which pine lumber had been drawn out two years previously. From the pond a less well trodden trail led on over a high ridge of forest land, to the northwest, for three miles, then descended into a heavily timbered valley, to an old log structure known as "the skedaddlers' fort."

From "the skedaddlers' fort," there was still the faint trace of a path through the woods, for two miles further, to the banks of Lurvy's Stream.

Thence the path continued along the bank of this large brook, for four or five miles, then crossed it at a sandy ford, to a large opening in the forest, partly natural meadow and partly cleared, called "the old slave's farm," where there were two deserted log cabins.

Years before, a negro, said to have been a slave who had escaped from one of the Southern States and was fleeing to Canada, settled in the woods here by the stream, thinking perhaps that he had reached Canada already. He cleared land, subsisted somehow, and made for himself a considerable farm upon the naturally open intervale. He lived here alone for many years, seen at times by passing lumbermen, or hunters. Some ludicrous stories are told of the fright which the sight of a jet black man gave inexperienced whites who chanced to stumble upon him suddenly and alone in the woods! There were certain ignorant persons who always considered this poor, lonely outcast as being a near relative of "old Nick."

During the Civil War he disappeared from his "farm" and may have returned to the South, being no longer in fear of bondage. A little cabin of hewn logs had sufficed him for a house and a few yards distant another cabin gave shelter to his poultry and cow. These cabins having stood unoccupied for many years in snow and rain, had bleached themselves into cleanliness, and were not unfit to camp in for a few days. It was here that we had decided to make our headquarters, while exploring the streams and forest adjacent.

We had taken an ax as well as a gun; and by stopping to clear an occasional windfall from the old road and going slowly over the logs, stones and holes, the horses took us up to Clear Pond in about two hours.

The deciduous trees were now nearly bare, save here and there a beech or a deep purple ash. The golden red foliage of the sugar maples and the yellow birches lay rustling under foot.

The woods looked light and open since the leaves had fallen. Only the hemlocks and spruces retained their somber density, with a few firs in the swamps and here and there a lofty pine on the mountain sides. All the summer birds had gone already; but a few red-headed woodpeckers were still tapping decayed tree trunks; and numerous jays made the woodland resound to their varied outcries, first shrill and obstreperous, then plaintive. Far up a hillside of poplar, a horde of crows were clamoring over some corvine scandal, perhaps.

It was a sylvan, but wholly lonely scene, save for the partridges rising, after every few rods, from the path in rapid whirring flight, or standing still for a moment with sharply nodding heads and a quick, short note of alarm, ere taking wing.

Willis, walking ahead with his gun, soon startled us with its near report, adding a fine speckled cock to our

prospective larder; erelong he shot another and still another. These fine birds were very plenty in the borders of the "great woods."

On reaching Clear Pond, we were obliged to say good-by to our team. The wagon could go no further; for here the more recent lumber road terminated, the trail beyond being older and much obstructed by fallen trees.

Then began the real labor of carrying our baskets. Addison and I led off with one basket and the ax; while Tom and Willis followed with the other. The girls came on at leisure, in the rear; they were seeing a great deal that was novel in the woods; and having but light loads, they could enjoy it better than we boys who were carrying the bushel baskets.

Going up the side of the wooded ridge, a pine marten was espied in full chase after a red squirrel, up and down the trunk of a spruce.

"What a specimen he would make to mount!" Addison exclaimed, and dropping his "ear" of our basket, unslung his gun and ran forward to get a shot; but the shy creature vanished in time to save its life, through the thick tops of the adjacent trees. Near the top of the ridge, he fired at a red-tailed hawk which had alighted on the top of a pine stub; the distance was too great, however, and the hawk sailed away placidly.

After crossing the ridge, the path led us through denser, darker woods. A large animal which Willis thought to be a bear, but Addison and Thomas deemed more likely to be a deer, was heard to run away through a copse of cedar, a little in advance of us. We passed some very large swamp elms here and several basswoods fully four feet in diameter.

At length, a few minutes before twelve o'clock, by the old silver watch (which Kate had brought from home to keep time for us during the trip) we came out at the "skedaddlers' fort," where we had

planned to stop for lunch and make a pot of coffee. This was the first time I had heard of this old structure, thus singularly named. But Willis, Thomas and Kate knew its history; Addison and our girls had also heard accounts of it.

It stood in the midst of a little opening — now overgrown again — made by felling the great bass, hemlock, and spruce trees, of which its log walls were built. In length, it may have been forty feet, by about twenty-five in width. It was substantially roofed with logs and "splits" covered with gravel. There were little ports, six or eight inches square, at intervals in the walls, at a height of six or seven feet from the ground, and one heavy door, or gate, of hewn plank, five or six inches thick. The little brook in the valley flows beneath one corner of the building, ensuring water to those who may have dwelt within.

This log structure, suggestive both of warfare and refugee life, was a great puzzle to a party of city young men who not many years ago penetrated these forest solitudes, on a hunting excursion. They concluded that it was built at a time when defence against the Indians was necessary. A writer for a New York magazine, who seems to have stumbled on this old "block-house," as he calls it, also came to the conclusion that it was a relic of early border warfare.

It is nothing of the sort, however, and instead of being a hundred years old, it is less than fifty. The city visitors did not make proper allowance for the rapidity with which, in a damp, dense forest, everything made of wood becomes moss-grown and decays.

During the Civil War, there was a class of so-called "skedaddlers;" fellows undeserving the name of citizens, who, when the Republic called for their services, ran away to Canada, or, gaining some remote covert in the forest, defied the few officials who could be spared from the front, to enforce law at home. But to the honor of our people it can be truthfully said,

that these weak-hearts were comparatively few in number. Such there were, however; and to a party of them the "skedaddlers' fort" owes its existence. It was built at about the time the first "draft" of men was ordered in 1862. There were two or three leading spirits, and altogether a gang of eighteen or twenty men banded together in that vicinity to elude the enrollment. They "skedaddled" one night — that was the time this ugly word originated — and took refuge in the woods with their guns; and not long after, it is supposed, they built this log fortalice in the depths of the wilderness.

In the dubious state of public feeling at that time, the people of the county did not say much, directly, about the skedaddlers. No one, not of the gang, knew who or how many were at the fort. At one time it was rumored that there were a hundred armed men in the woods, probably an exaggeration. Several farmers lost young cattle, which it was supposed were stolen to supply food for the fort. One story was, that a number of cows had been driven into the woods, to furnish a supply of milk. It is hardly probable that these men could have been so ignorant as to think that they would be able to resist the power of the government, if official action were taken against them, although the fact of their building a fort gave color to such a supposition. The wildest boasts were made, indirectly, through sympathizers with them. Ten thousand troops, it was asserted, could not drive them out of the woods! The skedaddlers, it was said, were about to set up a new State there in the wild lands and declare themselves free of the United States! Another threat was that they would get "set off" and join Canada. If a Federal soldier showed his blue coat in those woods (so rumor said), he would suddenly meet a fate so strange that nobody could describe it!

Some months passed, when a boy named Samuel

Murch — an older brother of Willis and Ben — who trapped in the woods every fall, discovered the fort one day and reconnoitered it. He had followed a cow's tracks up from the cleared land. Several men were seen by him about the stockade, and there was a large camp-fire burning outside, with kettles hanging from a pole over it.

Every two or three days thereafter, Sam Murch, as he trapped, would go around for a sly peep at the "fort;" and he kept people informed as to appearances there.

It chanced that in October, that fall, a young volunteer, named Adney Deering, came home on a furlough. He had been wounded slightly in the leg, by a fragment of shell.

Adney, who was a bright, handsome young fellow, then in his twentieth year, looked very spruce in his blue uniform. He was brimful of patriotism and gave graphic accounts of battles, with warlike ardor. When he heard of the "skedaddlers" and their fort, he expressed the greatest indignation and contempt for them. At a husking party one evening, several of the young men proposed that Adney should go with them on a deer hunt in the "great woods," before he went back to his regiment. Someone then remarked that, if he went, he had better not wear his uniform, as threats had been made of shooting the first soldier who showed his head in the woods. This aroused Adney's ire. "Let them shoot!" he exclaimed. "I will wear my uniform anywhere I choose to go! I will go all through those woods and walk right up to the door of their 'fort!'"

Several of the older men then advised him not to go near the "fort."

"Pooh!" cried Adney. "I used to know many of those fellows. They are a set of cowards. Ten to one, they wouldn't dare fire at a soldier!"

Others who were present thought they would dare;

and Adney became excited. "It is a disgrace," he exclaimed, "that those skulkers are allowed to harbor there!" And he offered to wager that he could take six soldiers and drive them out, without firing a single cartridge.

One or two of his friends laughed at this boast, which so exasperated Adney that he instantly declared that he could drive them out alone. All laughed still more heartily at that. The laughter only stimulated Adney to make good his rather loud boast, if possible; and the result was, that he hit on the following stratagem for routing the "skedaddlers." There was no lack of drums in the neighborhood, for in those days the boys, who were not old enough to volunteer, had fond dreams of going to the War as drummer-boys. Adney went about privately next morning with Sam Murch and induced three or four young fellows to take drums and go with him into the woods that afternoon. Under Sam's lead the little party arrived in the vicinity of the "fort," shortly before nightfall. Adney then stationed one of the boys with his drum at a point to the northeast of the log fortress, at a distance of about half a mile from it, in the thick woods. Another was posted farther around to the north; and still another to the northwest.

Adney's orders to them all were to keep quiet at their posts until they heard him fire a gun. Then all three were to beat the "long roll," then a quickstep; in fact, they were to make all the drum-racket they could, as if a number of companies, or regiments, were advancing on the fort from all quarters, except the south.

Adney himself went down near the fort, just at dusk, and contrived to give the inmates a glimpse of his figure in his army blue — as if he were a spy, reconnoitering the place. He then withdrew, and ten or fifteen minutes later, fired off his gun, when at once from three different points, in the darkening forest,

there burst forth the roll of drums, Adney calling out in military accents, *" Steady! Close up! Forward! Forward!"*

The result showed that the young soldier's estimate of the valor of the skedaddlers was a perfectly correct one. For no sooner did they hear the roll of drums, than, fancying that they were being surrounded by a force of soldiers, they deserted their fort and skedaddled again, out through the woods on the south side. From the stories they afterward told, it is pretty clear that they did some remarkable running that night, and were about as badly frightened as they could be. Six or seven of them kept to the woods and made their way into Canada, where they lived till after the close of the War. One, the " Lieutenant " of the gang, ran home — as his wife told the story — and hid under a pile of old straw in the back yard. Several others were known by their neighbors to be lurking at their homes, keeping in cellars and chambers, during the following week. In short, this well-planned " attack " of Adney's broke up their rendezvous in the " great woods," and the fort was never occupied afterwards. The young soldier, who had approached near enough to witness the stampede, bivouacked his small drum-corps there that night very comfortably, and marched home in triumph next morning. The affair created much merriment and many jokes; and the moral would seem to be, that a fellow who will sneak off when his country calls for his services, is never a person to be feared as a warrior.

It was not a very pleasant place to linger in; and directly after we had taken our luncheon, we resumed our journey along the old trail, having a hard jaunt before us (as Addison well knew) to reach the " old slave's farm " before nightfall. There were a great many windfalls across the trail from the " fort," to the stream; we were an hour at least making the two miles, and the path along the bank was even worse,

for freshets had lodged great quantities of drift stuff on the flats, so that, at last, we abandoned the trail altogether and took to the less obstructed woods, a little back from the banks.

The stream is a pretty one, being here not above forty or fifty feet in width, running over a sandy bed, sometimes pebbles, and again bending around in a deep pool where there are trout of good size, or at least were then.

It seemed a very long way to the opening; the girls were becoming tired; and we boys with the baskets had quite enough of it, long before we reached the ford which Addison and Thomas, who had been here before, remembered to be near two very tall pines. Several times we feared that we must have passed it; but finally, at about four o'clock, the great bushy opening on the other side of the stream came in view. Immediately then Addison saw the pines, and taking off our boots and stockings, we all walked across on a sandy bar over which the water ran in a shallow, being nowhere over a foot deep. It was quite cold, however, so that we were glad to replace socks and boots, after crossing.

The old slave's cabins stood about two hundred yards from the brook and, as above described, were situated some twenty yards apart. The land about them had been cleared at one time and put into grass, or corn. But low clumps of hazel-nut bushes were now growing around the cabins. About a year previously a party of deer hunters had camped here for a few days and, thinking the cabins snug and pleasant, had cleared them out nicely and built bunks in them to sleep in. We found the remains of their old couches of fir boughs still in the bunks. Their camp-fire had been made in the open space, midway between the two cabins; and they had constructed a species of stone fireplace for setting their kettles in.

"Here we are!" Addison exclaimed, as we set down

our baskets. "What say to this for a camping-place, girls!"

"Oh, this is jolly!" cried Kate. "And won't it be nice, Doad, we girls can have a whole cabin all to ourselves! Now which one can we have?"

"You are privileged to take your choice," replied Addison. "Take the one you like best."

The girls went peeping into each, to examine them well, and were in doubt for some moments. In fact, there was not much to choose betwixt the two.

At length, Kate announced that they would have the one "the old slave" lived in, himself.

"No doubt he spent many a lonesome hour there," said Theodora. "I should like to know his history."

"That's what nobody can find out," said Tom. "But I am glad he lived here and left his hut for us to camp in."

We sat on the grassy sward of the old yard and rested for some minutes, then began our preparations for supper.

"Now we must all fall to with a will," said Addison. "It is a job to get things fixed up nice for night."

"Addison, you be captain and tell us each what to do," suggested Kate. "We will all obey and work like good soldiers; — for we all want some supper, I guess."

"Well, then," said Addison, "what do you want for your supper?"

"Poached eggs on toast!" cried Ellen.

"I think some of those partridges would go well," said Kate.

"Would it take long to fricassee them?" Addison asked.

"Oh, not very long," said Theodora.

"I can dress them off in ten minutes," said Willis, "if you don't insist on their being picked and will let me skin them instead; for I can take their skins off, feathers and all, in just one minute apiece."

"Go ahead," exclaimed Addison; "Tom, get dry wood from that drift-heap down by the brook and build a nice camp-fire; and Kate, you and Doad unpack the baskets and get the coffee-pot, tin kettle and frying-pan ready. While you are doing that, the rest of us can throw out those old yellow boughs from the bunks, then cut new ones and make the bunks all up sweet and fresh for night; and after that we will drag up a lot of wood for our camp-fire, through the evening."

"Shall we not keep a camp-fire burning all night?" Theodora asked.

"Oh, yes! let's not let the fire go out!" cried Ellen. "We're a dreadful ways from home, up here in the great woods! How many miles have we come, Ad?"

"About seventeen miles, all told."

"Yes; do let's have a good roaring fire all night," said Kate.

It quite frightened the girls to think how far they were from home, in the forest, now that the sun began to sink behind the tree tops.

"All right!" laughed Addison. "Gather lots of wood. It will take piles of it to burn all night."

But Theodora made a discovery which gave them a good deal of comfort.

"We've got a door to our cabin!" she called out from inside it. "Quite a good door. See," she said, swinging it. "We can shut our cabin up, just like any house, and fasten it, too. Here's a great button on the door-post. Nothing can get in to hurt us after we shut and button our door. Have you got any door to your cabin?"

Investigation of our cabin disclosed no door. There was a *button* on the door-post; but the door had been removed.

The girls laughed at us. "A fine house you've got!" said Kate. "No door! You will be carried off before morning by a panther."

"Never mind us," replied Addison. "Fasten up your own door, snug and tight."

"When we get ready to go to bed," said Willis, "we will *turn our button;* I guess that will answer for us.

"But I've got the partridges all dressed," he continued, "and I'm going to cut them up and put them into the tin kettle, to parboil, and then, when they are partly cooked, you can put them into the frying-pan, if you like."

"Can't you thicken up some kind of a flour and butter gravy to go with those partridges, Kate?" said Tom.

"Why, bless you, Thomas, there's no flour!" replied his sister.

"I think I could use Indian meal instead of flour," said Theodora, "though I wouldn't promise it would be as good, since it might taste a little coarse."

"Well, try it, anyway," said Tom; "for I like that kind of a gravy first rate."

"Oh, it just makes me laugh to hear boys talk about cooking," exclaimed Kate. "They do have such droll ideas!"

"Well, I know what I like," said Tom; "and I wouldn't give much for a girl that cannot make a gravy."

"Oh, the nice, agreeable boy! So he should have his gravy on his partridge," teased Kate.

"I've too much regard for the reputation of our family to quarrel with my sister before folks," laughed Thomas. "She's an awful provoking thing, though!"

"Oh, the dear boy!" retorted Kate.

"Somebody give me some cold water to hold in my mouth," groaned Tom. "She must have the last word, anyway."

That was quite a common kind of encounter between Tom and his sister Kate; yet I never saw brother and sister more attached to each other. Only about a year

and a half younger than her brother, Kate was a match for him in about everything and rather more than a match in repartee.

Meantime Theodora was toasting some squares of bread to put in the partridge fricassee, and looking about for a dish to manufacture Tom's butter and meal gravy in.

There was a copse of little firs, standing about a low, wet piece of ground, a few hundred feet away. To these we had recourse for the material to fill the bunks.

Thomas having collected a wood-pile of good proportions, proceeded to put on fourteen potatoes to boil, reckoning two for each member of the party; and as the partridges were boiling briskly, fast progressing to the cooked condition, Catherine made coffee. It was agreed, however, that after that evening, we were to take coffee but once per day; and everybody voted to have it in the morning.

Addison now busied himself devising a "table;" and in this matter he was assisted by the labors of the previous party of deer-hunters who had left a large board behind them, to be set on forked stakes, driven into the ground; there were also two rough benches for seats.

It was not till after dusk had fairly settled over the wilderness that our supper was pronounced ready by the many cooks who had taken a hand in its preparation. The camp-fire was replenished, so that a genial glow and plenty of light was diffused about; and then our meal began. We had the three partridges quite well cooked; and Thomas had his dear gravy. There were boiled potatoes and some pork, fried crisp, to suit Willis; also boiled eggs for all and plenty of toasted bread with butter. Kate had also brought a lot of "cookies," which went well with coffee.

Addison sat at one end of the table and dished out the partridges. Theodora presided over the coffee; and Ellen and Kate looked after the toast. The long

jaunt had given us fine appetites and we cleared the rude board of the eatables, enjoying it as only a hungry party of campers, who have had their own supper to get and have waited an hour or two for it to cook, can enjoy such a meal.

Dishes had then to be picked up, and water brought and heated; for dishes must needs be washed.

"Oh dear!" sighed Ellen. "I did hope I could get to a place once where there were no dishes to be washed. I always have it to do at home."

"You've got to that place!" exclaimed Thomas. "I'll wash them, if you girls will agree to eat off them next meal and find no fault."

"I'll wipe them if Tom'll wash them!" cried Willis. "'Tis tough for girls always to have to wash dishes."

"I agree to find no fault for one," said Ellen.

"We might do as they are said to do in the lumbering camps," remarked Addison; "that is to eat off the same plates without washing, till we forget what we ate off them last."

"I object to such a plan as that!" cried Theodora. "I would rather wash them all, myself."

Tom and Willis washed the dishes that night, however; and the girls sat back on their bench and smiled and pinched each other, to see the performance.

By the time the dishes question was disposed of and everything had been tidied up and the fire once more attended to, the darkness of an October night had fallen. Everything outside the circle of our firelight was veiled in obscurity. There was no moon and it was a little cloudy, at least, the stars did not seem to show much. Very soon as we sat on our benches in front of the girls' cabin, we began to hear various wild notes from the great somber forest about us.

"What is that kind of plaintive cry that I hear now and then near the stream?" Theodora asked. "It's like the word *seet!* I have heard it several times

since dark, once or twice back of the cabins, and now out there by the two pines."

"That? Oh, that is the night note of a little mouse-catching owl," said Addison. "Some term it the saw-whet owl, I believe. There are numbers of these little fellows about at night, in these woods. They catch lots of woods mice and such small birds as chickadees."

"But hark! what was that strange, lonesome, hollow cry?" said Ellen, as an outcry at a distance, came wafted on the still air.

"Oh, that's a raccoon," said Tom. "He's trying to attract the notice of some other 'coon. You'll hear him for fifteen or twenty minutes now, every minute or so."

"They came into our cornfield last year," said Willis. "We heard them every night, calling to each other. I set a trap, but never could get any of them into it."

Willis went on to relate several raccoon stories which his older brothers had told him. "Hullo!" he suddenly interrupted himself. "Hear that? away off up there by the foot of the mountain?"

"I know what that was," said Tom. "That was a screamer."

"What is a 'screamer?'" Theodora asked.

"Oh, it's a kind of wild-cat," replied Thomas. "You tell her, Addison."

"If it is a wild-cat, it is the same as the 'lucivee,' or loup-cervier," replied Addison. "But I have never heard one cry out at night; so I cannot say for certain."

"Oh, I have," said Willis. "They have little tassels on the top of their ears and are about as big as a fair-sized dog. But they never come near a camp; they are so shy that you never can get sight of one, though the lumbermen tell stories of having fights with them. They've got long claws and could

scratch like sin, if they were cornered up anywheres."

"Sometimes they will follow after anybody for a long ways," said Thomas. "Father told me that, when he was a boy, the mill stream at the village got so low one fall that they could not grind wheat or corn there. So grandpa sent him over to Pride's grist mill, in Willowford, with the horse and wagon and a load of corn. There were a lot of grists in ahead of him; and before the miller got around to grind out father's corn, it was dark, and he had to drive home, thirteen miles, in the evening. It was woods nearly all the way then; and after he had gone a mile, or two, and it had come on very dark, so dark he could hardly see his hand before him, he heard a snarling noise behind him. Turning round, he saw two bright spots just behind the wagon. It scared him; he started the horse up, but those spots came right close along after him. Every time he looked around, he would see them, and he could hear the creature's feet *pat* in the road, too, as it ran after the wagon. He kept the horse trotting along pretty fast and held the butt of his whip all ready to strike, if the creature jumped into the wagon. It didn't jump in, but kept near the hind end of the wagon; and it followed father for as much as two miles, till he met a man with an ox team. He was so taken up watching for those eyes, back there in the dark, that he came near running into the ox team; but the man shouted to him to pull up. He told the man that something had been chasing him; but the eyes had disappeared; and he saw nothing more of them. Father thinks now that it was a 'screamer,' though it might have been a panther. There were lots of panthers in the woods, in those days."

"Are there any now?" asked Theodora, looking a little uncomfortable.

"No," said Addison. "I don't think there are."

"Well, I'm not so sure of that," said Thomas. "There may be one passing through here, once in a while. Did you ever hear the Old Squire tell the story of the panther that he and my grandfather killed, when they were boys?"

"No," said Addison. "The old gentleman never talks much of his early exploits."

Ellen said that she had heard Gram speak of it once.

"Tell the story, Tom," said I.

"Oh, you get the old gentleman to tell it to you, sometime," replied Tom. "I can't tell it good. But 'twas real *scarey* and interesting. Something about a cow. The panther killed my grandfather's father's cow, I believe. The men were all away. It was in the winter time; and those two boys followed the panther's track away up into the great woods here somewheres and shot it. It's a real interesting story. You get the old gentleman to tell it to you some evening."

"We will," said Theodora. "I'll ask him the first night after we go home."

"My! Did you hear what an awful noise *that* was, just now?" exclaimed Kate.

We had all heard it — a singular yell, not wholly unlike the human voice, yet of ugly, wild intonation. Addison and Thomas exchanged glances.

"Queer what a noise a screech owl will make," the former remarked, after a moment's silence.

"Dear me, was that a screech owl?" said Theodora.

"Oh, I guess so," replied Addison carelessly. "They make an awful outcry sometimes."

Tom did not say anything, but he told me next day that it was a bear which had made that cry, only a little ways from the camp; and that he had winked to Addison not to tell the girls, for they were looking nervously about them, after hearing the "screamer" story.

It was not a cold night, for October; yet as the evening advanced the fire felt very comfortable.

As we sat talking, several striped squirrels came out in sight into the firelight. There were hundreds of these little fellows there in the clearing, gathering the hazel nuts for their winter store. The hazel nuts were very large, nearly the size of those sold as filberts. The squirrels made their winter burrows in the ground about the old stumps. Kate had gathered a pint dipper full of the nuts before dark; and as we sat talking, we cracked them with round stones from the stream. Once we heard a great rushing and running, as of large animals through the bushes, at no great distance away.

"Hear the deer go!" Willis exclaimed.

Tom laughed. "We will pop over some of them to-morrow," said he. But he whispered to me a few minutes later, that he expected two bears were having a squabble over there in the brush. By and by we heard them running again; and this time they passed around to the south of our camping place, and we heard them go, splashing, through the stream and away into the woods on the other side. Willis jumped up and gave a loud *so-ho!* which resounded far across the darkened wilderness; and then for a time all the wild denizens of the forest seemed to remain quiet, as if listening to this unusual shout.

"Oh, don't, Willis!" cried Ellen. "It seems as if you were telling all these wild creatures where we are!"

"So I am," said Willis; "if they want to call on us, they will find a load of buckshot all ready for them."

"What time is it, Kate?" Addison at length asked.

"Twenty-five minutes to ten," she replied.

"Well, we want to get an early start to-morrow morning," said Addison. "So I guess we had better go to bed and try to get as much sleep as we can. I'm tired for one."

"So am I," said Theodora. "But I don't believe I shall sleep much."

"Oh, you need not be the least bit afraid," said Addison.

"We'll look out for you, girls," said Thomas. "I will kindle up a good fire, so that it will shine right into your cabin; and you can close and button your door. You need not be one bit afraid to go to sleep. Nothing will come near this fire."

"You are going to keep the camp-fire burning all night, Addison, aren't you now?" said Theodora.

"Oh, yes," replied he, cheerily. "If I don't get too soundly asleep," he added, in a lower voice, at which Tom and Willis laughed, well knowing that it is one thing for a tired party to talk of tending a fire all night, but quite another thing to actually do so, as the morning's cold ashes generally show.

"If I don't miss of it," said Tom, "I'm going to have a rare dish for breakfast. I hope I sha'n't oversleep."

"What is it?" Ellen asked.

"Oh, you will find out at breakfast," he replied.

"Well, good-night, boys," said Kate. "I hope you will all sleep well, but not so well as to forget the camp-fire."

"No, please now do not let that go out," added Theodora.

"We will look out for it," said Willis — "in the morning!"

Good-nights were interchanged; the girls then went into their cabin and not very long after shut and fastened their door.

We boys, in the doorless cabin, soon spread up our own bunks; we were all tired, and novel as the situation was to me, I think I had not been lying down over ten or fifteen minutes, when I fell soundly asleep.

As a rule, healthy young folks, from twelve to fif-

teen years of age, do not lie awake much in the night, under any circumstances. Once asleep, they are not apt to wake, till well rested. The normal condition of a boy of that age, is to be in the open air all day, actively employed, either in play, or work, which keenly interests him, and to have all the good food he wants, at suitable hours. To a boy thus engaged, the period from the time he falls asleep in the evening till next morning, is apt to be one of utter oblivion. That is the way to sleep. Older persons, troubled by insomnia and its usual cause, bad digestion, would do well to return to these simple and health-giving modes of life, best seen in an active boy, or girl.

Somebody shook me. I thought I had but that moment fallen asleep. It was Thomas. "Wake up," he whispered. "Let's you and I go catch some trout for breakfast. They say this brook is full of them. I brought along my hooks. Come on."

The word *trout* is a good one to get a sleepy boy's eyes open with; I rose at once.

"Let's go out still," whispered Tom, "so as not to wake the girls. I don't want them to see us start off, for we may not have any luck, you know; and it's a thing I never could stand, to come back from fishing, with no fish, and have folks asking me where my fish are."

Addison was awake and lay regarding us, sleepily; but Willis had already got up and gone out with the gun. It was quite light and nearing sunrise; there was a slight frost on the crisp grass about the cabins. The fire had gone out, hours before; not even a smoldering ember or a wreath of smoke, remained of it. The squirrels had already begun to "chicker" in the hazel copses; and a large pileated woodpecker was calling out loudly from the top of a tall pine stub, off in the opening.

We had nothing for bait, except a bit of white, fat pork. First we went down to the ford. "Look there,"

said Tom, pointing to our tracks of yesterday in the sand and some more recent impressions, nearly or quite as large. " See those bear tracks! Some bear has been smelling about here, during the night! Oh, this is quite a place for game. But don't talk *bear* much before the girls, or we shall get them so skittish that we cannot stir. They'll feel quite courageous this morning, when they wake up and find nothing has carried them off, if they don't see these bear tracks." Thomas proceeded to scuff the tracks over with his boot.

We then cut two hazel fishing rods, tied a line and hook to each, baited the hooks with a scred of the pork, and then going down the stream, till we came to a pool at a bend, crept carefully up to the verge of the bank and gently dropped in our hooks.

" Shake 'em just a little easy," whispered Tom; for as yet my education in the art of trout fishing had been neglected. " Shake the bait easy, and kind o' bob it up and down; and if you get a bite don't yank very hard, just a little pull, and then swing him out on to the bank."

His words were hardly out, before I felt a vigorous tug at my hook, and quite forgetful of advice, gave a tremendous jerk and flung a half pound trout clean over our heads and into the hazel bushes!

" Gracious! you've scared every fish in this hole!" exclaimed Tom. " But that's a good trout. Pick him up and string him. I guess I'll go up stream now, and you fish on down stream. When we each get a dozen, we will go to the camp; but don't stay too long, anyway."

Tom was a little disgusted, I suppose, with the way I yanked out that trout, and thought that I had better fish by myself. He went off up the brook. I determined to catch a dozen as quickly as he did. So I strung my half-pound fish on a hazel twig, and scud along to the next bend of the brook. I had no more than looked to my bait and dropped in there, when I

had a bite and (this time more carefully) swung out a thumping big trout that would have weighed near a pound! His sides were well specked with red; he was a beauty!

Taking him off the hook, after some trouble with him in a bunch of brush, I strung him, dropped in again, and had a third one out — smaller — in less than half a minute. The brook was plainly well stocked with trout. Baiting again, I tossed in and caught a fourth in less time than it had taken me to cut off the scred of pork. I got a fifth and a sixth, both good-sized, and had my seventh bite, when, jerking, I lost him, and the hook, catching on a dry pine branch which stuck out from a pile of drift, was broken. It was the only one I had, and I stamped the ground with vexation. Tom would beat me now; and as it would do no good to linger after the hook was gone, I took my string of half a dozen — weighing fully three pounds — and went back to camp as fast as I could, in order to show good time on the half dozen.

I was in a few minutes ahead of Thomas. But he brought a dozen nice ones, though some of his were smaller than mine. He had one larger than my largest, however. The eighteen, as we laid them out on the grass, were a pretty lot to look at, with the sunshine playing on their spotted sides.

Meantime, I had heard Willis's gun several times, and Tom said that he had heard it, too. "He's shooting partridges, or else gray squirrels, I guess," Tom remarked. "Gray squirrels, where they have fed on hazel nuts for a month or two, make a luscious good stew."

Addison had just come out and kindled a fire; and before we had our trout dressed, ready to fry, Willis came in with a string of four partridges, but no squirrels.

"Are the partridges plenty?" Ad asked.

"Well, there's some. They seem a little shy, though," replied Willis, taking the cap off the tube of the gun, which had a percussion lock. "I shouldn't wonder if some hunter had been firing among them, by the way they fly," he added. "But we can get all we shall want."

"Aren't the girls up yet?" said Thomas. "Wonder what they would say if they knew the fire all went out by eleven o'clock! There's lots of bears round here, too."

"That's so," said Willis. "I've seen bear sign out here in the opening this morning in more'n a dozen places."

"Well, keep quiet about it," said Thomas. "We'll call it *deer*. When any of us speak of *deer*, we boys will know that it's bear. It's of no use to scare the girls; and the bears won't touch us this time of year anyway."

We began getting breakfast. Potatoes were put to roast in the embers; but the chief dish was to be trout. Thomas began frying them in butter and meal and set a big tin platter down by the fire to keep them hot, after he had taken them from the pan. Willis tended the fire and kept the embers banked over the potatoes; and Addison got on water for coffee. About this time the door of the girls' cabin was heard to creak; and we saw Catherine and Theodora peeping out.

"What lazy things girls are!" Addison exclaimed, derisively. "Here it is nigh seven o'clock and you sluggards are not out yet."

"Oh, we've been awake and up a long time," said Kate. "It was fun to lie and hear you boys pottering about, trying to get breakfast, and to hear you talk, too. I suppose we shall all be obliged to go down to the brook to wash our faces," she added. "I don't believe any of you boys have thought of washing your faces yet! Tom looks frowzy; I won't say anything about the others."

"No," said Addison. "We don't think of such a thing as washing our faces up here!"

"Well, then, you had better, if you are going to take breakfast with us; hadn't they, Theodora?"

"Indeed, they had!" cried Theodora. "I decline to sit down to breakfast with any fellow who hasn't washed his face."

Thereupon the three girls set off for the ford, with combs, soap and towels.

"You will see a lot of *deer* tracks down there in the sand," Thomas called after them, with a wink to the rest of us.

Our breakfast was nearly ready, and with everything keeping warm by the fire, we now ran down to the ford, to perform our own rather tardy ablutions. The girls, looking fresh as pinks, had finished theirs and were gathering more hazel nuts, and Theodora and Kate had crossed the ford to gather a few bunches of high-bush cranberry fruit, which they espied hanging temptingly out over the stream, on that side. These cranberries make a nice relish for meat, or fish.

"Come on, girls!" Tom called out, as soon as we had doused our faces and ran a comb through our locks. "Come on now, lively! Breakfast is all ready and I've got something nice, I assure ye."

We went back to the cabins together.

"I didn't know that deer made such big tracks as those down there in the sand," said Theodora. "I thought deer made little tracks more like sheep tracks."

"Oh, caribou deer make tremendous tracks, as big as a man's almost, because they step down upon their fetlocks and their feet are hairy," said Thomas, with a wondrous wise look to the rest of us.

"But are there caribou deer in Maine?" Theodora asked.

"Oh, a good many," replied Addison.

"Don't ask them any more questions, Doad," said

Kate. "They are deceiving us about something, I don't know what, exactly. But let them enjoy it, if they find so much sport in it."

We sat down to breakfast at once, and the trout were delicious, at least we all thought so; and so were the baked potatoes, eggs and toast.

"Now," said Addison after we had finished, "my program for to-day is to climb the mountain over on the other side of the stream, and search for some mineral ledges which I have heard of there. I don't want the others to go with me, unless they want to, and would rather do that than anything else. There are plenty of nice trips to make. Those who wish can go to dig spruce gum upon the side of that dark-looking mountain on the far side of the opening here; or they can go fishing, or hunting, or go out here and collect hazel nuts for winter. For we can carry home a bushel of nuts with us if we choose."

"We might get ten bushels," said Thomas, "if we could only dig out the hoards of these squirrels that have been at work all the fall."

"Then there is another trip that I want to make," said Addison. "They say there is a mountain side, about five miles up here to the northeast of us, that is covered with balm o' Gilead trees, thousands of them. I want to find out if that is really so, and if the trees are easy to reach. For I have heard that druggists, in Boston and New York, pay four dollars a pound for the buds of this tree, when gathered at the proper season, in the early spring, to use for liniments and other medicines. If that is so, and there are great numbers of the trees, I want to make a trip up here about the first of May, next spring, and gather two bushel baskets full. I don't see why a small party might not earn a couple of hundred dollars in a few days."

"Good idea!" exclaimed Catherine. "And will you include us girls in your money-making party?"

"Of course," said Addison. "If you will go and help gather the buds, it shall be share and share alike."

"Then Addison," said Kate, laughing, "I guess I will join your expedition to-day. For you seem to be a pretty good business man, and I like folks that look out for making money."

"My sister Kate is a great girl for money," said Thomas.

"That is so," replied Kate. "I think that money is a great institution. I would like to get lots of it."

"I know that we all want to go on each and all of these trips," said Theodora. "I do, at any rate. So why not all go with Addison to-day, then go to look for the balm o' Gileads to-morrow; and then all go after spruce gum the next day."

"Next day is Sunday!" exclaimed Ellen.

"Well, then, Monday," said Theodora.

"But Monday we have to go home," said Willis. "My father told me to get back Monday and no mistake about it."

"Well then, we shall have to make a short trip after gum and go hazel-nutting and fishing all in one day," said Addison. "I don't see but that Tom and Willis will have to make the exploring trip up to the balm o' Gilead place to-day, if they are willing."

"All right," said Thomas.

"Why not make the trip this forenoon," said Willis, "and so come around to join you at this mountain over across where you are going for minerals."

"That will suit me," said Addison.

Our plans for the day were laid accordingly; and half an hour later, Addison and I, with the three girls, set off on our excursion to the mountain side; while Tom and Willis took the gun and went up the brook, in the direction of the balm o' Gilead hill.

"We shall get around where you are by noon," said Thomas. "You will hear us shouting for you."

Our party of five had first to ford the brook, then

make a trip of two miles or more through the forest. We took a lunch of bread and cheese, and a dipper along with us, as it was doubtful whether we should return till late in the day. The forest on the intervale between the stream and the mountain was mainly of spruce, basswood, yellow birch and a few firs. The balsam blisters on the leaden gray trunks of the latter were now plump and full, and when punctured, yielded each a few drops of balsam, as clear as crystal — the same " Canada balsam " which microscopists make so much use for preserving their " slides " of specimens. The French Canadians call the tree *epinette blanche;* it is very abundant in the swamps of the eastern provinces.

The yellow birches were large trees of very solid wood, displaying trunks shaggy with curling bark and moss. Many of the basswoods, too, were very large; the trunks of these when old had furrowed bark not wholly unlike sugar maples, but rather less rugged, and more regularly grooved. The great white ash trees, too, presented similar furrowed bark, but of lighter gray tint.

The spruces which were here most numerous, varied from a foot to two feet in diameter, being such as are ordinarily cut for lumber throughout Maine and Canada. These are the trees which afford the chewing gum, sold in the larger towns and cities. Kate was not long discovering some fine great lumps of it which studded a seam in a large spruce. " Lend me your knife, Addison," she exclaimed. " I want to dig some gum. Come here, girls."

Enough was dug in a few minutes to keep our whole party chewing all that day and at intervals for many subsequent days. It is a rather bootless kind of effort, at best, though it may tend to develop the muscles of one's jaws.

In the course of an hour we reached the foot of the mountain, then began climbing up the side of it,

which was quite steep and rough. Boulders of all sizes obstructed the way and we soon came to high ledges of bare gray rock which Addison declared to be mostly of granite. Through these rocks and ledges, however, there ran a great many veins of white quartz. Some of these veins were narrow, only an inch, or a few inches, thick; but others were wider and we presently found one of lovely tinted rose quartz not less than a yard thick.

"Oh, how beautiful!" Theodora exclaimed; she and Kate sat down by it, admiring the fine rosy tint. They wished to break off pieces to carry home; but we had brought no sledge, or other stone mason's tools. By searching about at the foot of the ledge below, however, Addison found a number of rosy fragments which had broken off in the lapse of time and fallen down the hillside. Such specimens are attractive to gather up, but heavy to carry home.

The girls having grown somewhat fatigued by this time, Addison and I left them at the rose quartz ledges, and went on more rapidly, to search for other minerals. We climbed higher up the mountain side, then went back and forth for nearly an hour. At last we came to the place he was in search of, a long crevice extending up and down the rough face of a ledge which rose almost perpendicularly to a height of forty feet.

The crevice was only wide enough to thrust in one's fingers and seemed to be lined with large, hexagonal crystals, as clear as water. The points of these crystals, which had beautiful facets, jutted out past each other in many places, and seemed to match together like teeth in opposed jaws. Still higher up in the same ledges, there were scores of quartz veins, converging and crossing each other in a network; and in some of this white quartz there were minute, bright, yellow specks which Ad said was gold. He thought that there was both gold and silver in this ledge, and that if the top were blasted off, the quartz beneath would be found

still richer in these precious metals; — that being the theory of mining engineers, as he had heard his father explain it.

After we had looked it over for a time, I went back to conduct the girls to the place; and with half an hour of hard climbing, they arrived at the foot of the crag.

Immediately then we discovered Addison, laboriously at work, attempting to break out fragments containing the crystals, by beating on the adjacent rock with a large stone. He had already succeeded in crushing off some of the crystals; but he ruined far more of the handsome points than he secured whole.

"Oh, aren't they beautiful!" was Theodora's first exclamation. "Do let's get a lot of them!"

"Is this what the hunters call the 'diamond ledge?'" Catherine asked.

"Yes," replied Addison, "but of course these crystals are only of quartz and by no means very valuable, save to put in collections of minerals. They are nothing but quartz rock."

"But they are very pretty," said Kate. "I would like to get a lot of them to set around our front doorstep."

"If only we had drills and a hammer, with a few pounds of gunpowder, we could throw out handsome specimens!" exclaimed Addison. "Sometime, let's get some tools and come up here. Who knows what lovely ones there may be deeper down in the crevice!"

As he was speaking, we heard a distant halloo, away to the north of us. "That's Tom and Willis," said I. "They're coming round this way."

We answered their shouts and soon heard another halloo.

"They'll find us now," said Addison.

"Let's spread our luncheon down here in the shadow of the crag," said Theodora.

There was no water at hand, so I took the little pail in which the lunch had been brought, and set off down the mountain in quest of some. Descending into a little hollow, I found a spring issuing from beneath a large rock. It was very cold water; the spring was shallow, yet with the dipper, I was able slowly to dip up a three quart pail nearly full. It was a delicate task to carry it up the steep mountain side, without spilling it. When at length I rejoined the party, at the foot of the crag, Tom and Willis were coming up from another direction.

"Hullo, Ad!" exclaimed Tom. "Seen any game?" I thought from the way he spoke that he and Willis had seen something in that line.

"No," said Addison, "we have been looking for something different. Have you seen any?"

"Yes, sir-ee!" said Tom.

"What was it?" inquired Kate.

"*Deer,*" said Tom with a knowing look at the rest of us boys.

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Addison. "Really *deer!* How snug did you get to a *deer?*"

"Snug enough to put our hands on him!" said Willis, with a chuckle.

"What, have you killed a *deer?*" asked Addison, incredulously.

"Really and truly we have!" said Tom, with a ring of exultation in his voice. "'Twasn't a very big one, though," he added.

"No," said Willis, "it was only a yearling *deer*. We came upon him behind a tree root. He only ran a few steps and then turned round to snuff at us. Tom let him have a load of heavy shot and knocked him stiff as a mitten."

"We shot two hedgehogs, too, up there at the balm o' Gilead hill," said Tom.

"Did you skin that *deer?*" Addison inquired, laughing.

"Yes; and we've got ten or twelve pounds of the meat, wrapped up in the skin."

"But where is the skin?" I asked.

"Oh, we left the skin, with the meat wrapped up in it, back here a few steps by a rock," replied Thomas. "I thought," he added with a knowing glance at us boys, "that I wouldn't bring such a thing as a green hide right up here where you had your luncheon spread out."

"Thomas," said Kate, looking sharply at him, "you are telling some kind of crooked story."

"Willis," said Thomas carelessly, "go get that *deer* hide."

Willis hesitated an instant, then went off through the bushes and in a few moments returned with a gory skin, rolled up, with the *hair* side carefully turned in.

"Want to examine it, Kate?" said he, holding it towards her.

"No, no," said Catherine and Theodora both in a breath. "Do take the dreadful thing away! But there's something wrong about your story all the same, Tom," Kate added with a searching look at him. "I can tell when you are fibbing just as well as need be; and I shall find out what you boys are looking so funny at each other for, yet."

"You are a very knowing girl, Kate," said Tom. "But let's have some luncheon and change the subject."

"Not till you go down to the spring and wash your hands," said Catherine, "after handling that dreadful thing."

Peace having been restored by the washing of hands, luncheon was eaten.

"Yes," said Willis, "and we saw two minks and a fish-cat, as we went up the stream; but they all three got out of sight before Tom could draw a bead on them."

"Wise minks," said Ellen.

"And Willis thinks that he caught a glimpse of a 'screamer,' just as we were going through a little fir thicket," Tom remarked.

"I'm almost sure it was one," corroborated Willis. "Oh, I wish we had a lot of traps and could stay up here a fortnight. I should like two dozen mink traps and a couple of big traps."

"What do you want of such big traps?" said Kate carelessly. "To catch *deer* in?"

"Of course not," said Willis. "No hunter around here ever sets traps for deer."

"I was thinking I had never heard of such a thing," replied Catherine, demurely.

"But how about the balm o' Gileads?" Addison asked suddenly.

"Oh, there's quite a growth of them!" replied Tom. "On the slope of the mountain, there are twenty or thirty old trees and no end of young ones coming up. I should think there was fifty acres of them altogether, shouldn't you, Willis?"

"I should," said Willis. "There would be buds enough there, though I should think it would be a stint to gather them."

"Oh, I don't think it would be such a very bad job," said Tom. "We could bend down the tops of the young trees and pick the buds off fast. I believe I could pick five or six pounds a day, anyhow."

"Five pounds would be twenty dollars, according to Addison's reckoning," said Theodora.

"Very fair wages for us!" said Kate. "I would even work for less."

"None of your jokes!" exclaimed Addison.

"I think that I could get a living, digging spruce gum up here," Kate went on. "Spruce gum is said to bring a dollar per pound, when nice and clean; I could dig gum days, and scrape it clean evenings, and live in the 'old slave's cabin;' that is, I could if the '*deer*'

didn't scare me away," she added, with a significant glance at us boys which made us feel rather foolish.

"Kate, you are almost as knowing as your grandma!" exclaimed Tom, derisively; "and you're not a quarter as old yet. Fact, you are almost too knowing for your age."

"Don't think other folks are too knowing because you are a little backward yourself, Thomas!" cried Kate. "Your *deer* stories are not quite right; there is something weak in them."

"Take a swallow of cold water in your mouth, Tom," said Addison, laughing.

Luncheon being disposed of, we gathered up our specimen crystals and the fragments of rose quartz, packed the crystals in moss, in the pail, and then tied up the rose quartz in one of our jackets. The latter made a rather heavy pack and, together with the pail, proved quite a load down the mountain and back through the woods to the opening. Willis took the *deer* skin; and Tom carried the *deer* meat. We returned across the wooded intervale, seeing no game but a partridge, which Willis shot, and reached the ford and the cabins at about four o'clock in the afternoon.

All of us were somewhat tired and sat down on the grass, or the benches, to rest awhile. The sun had already sunk near the tree-tops again; for by October 20th the afternoons are short in Maine. It was chilly, too.

"There will be a harder frost to-night than there was last night," Addison remarked.

Thomas brought wood and kindled a fire. "We must be stirring," he said. "It takes a long time to get dinner."

"What are we going to have to-day for dinner?" Ellen asked.

"*Deer* steak, I suppose," said Catherine, laughing.

"We must have those partridges that Willis shot this morning," said Addison.

"I can catch more trout," said Thomas.

"No; let's have the trout for breakfast," remarked Theodora. "They are splendid, fresh caught, for breakfast."

Willis went to get the partridges which he had hung up in a clump of hazels, a little way back of the cabins, but immediately returned, saying that they were missing. "Some creature has smelled them and pulled them down, I guess," said he.

"Suppose it was a *deer?*" asked Kate.

"Keep quiet," said Tom. "You've said enough about *deer.*"

"If she says *deer* again, let's tie that green deer hide over her head, Tom!" exclaimed Willis.

"You will not hear me say anything more, but I shall go on thinking, all the same," replied Catherine.

Theodora had gone into their cabin, to fetch our tin ware and frying-pan.

"Why!" she exclaimed, coming hastily out, in some fluster, "almost all our bread is gone!"

"Then somebody's been here," said Addison, "while we were away."

"Everything in the baskets has been pulled over," said Theodora.

We went to examine and found the baskets had really been disturbed, but nothing save bread had been removed.

"Some hungry hunter, I guess," said Addison. "Well, I hope it did him good."

"I reckon there's where the partridges went," said Tom.

"Well, he wasn't a very bad visitor," said Willis, "or he might have stolen a good deal more."

"Indeed, he might," said Theodora.

"But I wish he had left our bread and butter alone," exclaimed Ellen. "Who knows how dirty his hands were!"

"This raid cuts our dinner down a little, — losing

those partridges," said Tom. "So let's have our *venison* and some eggs fried with it."

But on looking into the basket, all the eggs were found to have disappeared, save eight!

"Worse and worse!" Addison exclaimed. "We shall have to fall back on potatoes, and do some good hunting and fishing during the rest of our stay here."

Tom was already slicing up the rather odd-looking venison, getting it ready to fry. Addison brought water and put on potatoes to boil; and Kate declared that she was going to make a dish of Indian meal mush, and have some of it to fry for breakfast, next morning.

Willis took the gun and slipped away, intending to knock over a few more partridges, to go with the one he had just shot, across the stream.

Ellen, too, went out to gather hazel nuts.

A dark bank of clouds had risen in the west, and the wind began to blow a little; it was not quite as pleasant as on the previous evening.

In the course of an hour our dinner was ready. Ellen had gathered a quart of nuts, and Willis came in with another partridge. It was not a good night for shooting, he said; and when he went inside our cabin to set aside the gun, he privately told Addison and me, that he had heard a dog bark off in the woods, to the west of the opening. Somehow it made us feel uneasy to think that some person, or persons, might be hanging about the place, though they had not shown themselves very evilly disposed toward us, having merely taken a loaf or two of bread and some eggs. Still there was no knowing who they were, or what their intentions might be.

The table was rigged up and we sat down to it as before. The fried *venison* was good and went well with our potatoes; and we had an egg apiece. But Kate's corn meal mush was the best dish, for we had

plenty of butter and sugar to garnish it; and we also toasted some cheese.

The sky had grown wholly overcast; and by the time we had finished our dinner, night came on. We had still to collect wood for a camp-fire; and all four of us boys set about this task at once and also carried armfuls of dry pine from a stub, a little way off, into our cabin to have in the morning for our fire, in case of rain. The wind was blowing and the air felt chilly and raw. There was not much pleasure in sitting out of doors, even before a fire; so we at length carried our benches into the girls' cabin and placed them around, just inside the open door, where the firelight shone in pleasantly. It was much more comfortable there than out in the wind. The smoke also drifted into our own cabin a good deal, but here we were quite out of it.

Nell produced her pailful of hazel nuts, and with this rather late dessert for our dinner, we whiled away an hour or more, Thomas or Addison going out now and then to tend the fire and keep it blazing brightly.

"What shall it be to-morrow," Theodora at length said; "fishing, or hazel-nutting?"

"Fishing in the morning and hazel-nutting in the afternoon will be a good plan, I guess," Addison remarked, — when, as he spoke, we heard a rather strange sound off in the woods. It was the first wild note of any kind which had come to our ears during the evening; the inhabitants of the forest seemed not to be musically inclined that night.

"I would like to know what made that noise," Tom said. "That wasn't a bear, nor a 'screamer.'"

We sat listening and pretty soon heard it again, a peculiar, long-drawn-out, hollow note.

"It doesn't sound like an animal's cry," said Addison. "It is more like a noise I have heard made by blowing through some big sea-shell."

"Not very likely to be sea-shells up here in the woods," remarked Theodora.

"Are there really any Indians in the 'great woods?'" I asked.

"I think not," said Addison.

Just then we heard the noise again. It seemed to be nearer and appeared to have moved around towards the stream.

"Well, that beats me all out for a noise!" exclaimed Willis. "I can't even guess what makes it."

"Nor I," said Tom. "Never heard anything like it."

To hear a mysterious sound like that, off in the wilderness, at night, will disturb almost anyone. Addison kept laughing and trying to talk of other things. Thomas stepped out as if to fix up the fire, but slipped into the other cabin and got the gun. He came out to one side, however, so that the girls did not see him from where they sat, and stood the gun against their cabin. All the while Addison was talking on, telling the girls how the Indians cooked hedgehogs by coating them all over with clay, then roasting them under their camp-fires. The girls were not very good listeners, however, for we kept hearing that same hollow, moaning noise, and it did not seem to be very far off. We were all pretty sure that it was not an animal, and concluded that it must be a man, or a number of men; but why they were making such a strange noise as that, we could not understand.

Suddenly the sound burst forth close at hand, apparently near the stream. It startled us all badly, and Thomas reached for the gun.

"I think, boys," said Kate quite calmly, yet with a curious little flutter in her voice, "that we had better all get inside the cabin here and shut the door."

"Perhaps we had," said Addison. "For if it is anybody who means mischief, it is foolish for us to sit in the light here where we can be seen so plainly."

Thereupon we all beat a retreat inside the cabin, shut the door and buttoned it; the firelight shone in, however, both through cracks in the door and chinks betwixt the logs. Tom drew the partridge charge from his gun and put in another heavier one, with five or six buckshot, mixed with the bird shot.

A moment or two after, we heard the noise again; and this time it seemed to be just in the rear of the other cabin. Addison stood with an eye at a crack, looking out.

"It's human beings, fast enough," he said in a low voice.

The girls were of course a good deal alarmed. We made the door fast with a prop in case an attack should be made.

Suddenly a large stone fell on the roof with a tremendous bump and clatter! It caused the girls to cry out in affright!

"Ad, this is somebody trying to scare us!" Tom muttered.

"Or murder us!" cried Ellen.

"You don't suppose it is Halse, do you?" I asked. "He threatened us with something or other!"

"Maybe," said Addison, doubtfully. "No; I don't believe he would dare come up here alone in the night," he added, after a moment's thought. "Halse is a great coward in the dark."

On the whole it did not seem likely that Halstead would be so many miles from home, in the woods, at that time of night.

Another stone struck on the roof, and soon a third struck the door! Then several seemed to fall on the roof at once, which led us to surmise that there was more than one person concerned in the attack.

Both Addison and Tom kept their eyes at the cracks, looking out to see if any of our assailants showed themselves.

"They are standing out there in that hazel clump,

just beyond the other cabin," Addison muttered. "I can see the bushes move there, every time a stone is thrown."

Just then a tremendous thump came against the door!

"I'll let them know they can't pelt us like that!" exclaimed Tom, taking up the gun. "Open the door just a crack, Ad, so I can push the muzzle out."

"I would not fire right at the bush," said Addison. "But fire high to let them know we are armed."

Tom thrust out the gun — and next instant we were all nearly deafened by the report!

Immediately following the report, too, there came a loud cry, a cry that thrilled me through and through, for I thought that I recognized the voice. Theodora cried out, "Oh, that's Halse! You've shot him! You've shot him!"

"That did sound a little like Halse!" cried Willis.

We were terror-stricken, yet uncertain. Addison cautiously opened the door and stepped out. Tom and I followed him. Willis, however, caught up the gun and began hastily to reload it.

"Halse!" Addison at length called out. "Are you there, Halse?"

Theodora followed us out and also Kate. "Oh, I'm so afraid he's killed!" Theodora cried out, almost sobbing.

Several of us called out; but there was no reply; and we could now hear no movement in the hazels.

"Do let's go and see," implored Theodora; and then Addison and Thomas took brands from the campfire and, waving these about, went out cautiously towards the bush clumps. We kept close behind them, Willis with the gun loaded; he was afraid that this was some trick to draw us into an ambush.

But on reaching the hazels, there was nothing to be found, save three round stones as big as a man's fist

or bigger, evidently brought there from the bed of the stream, to throw at the cabin.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Theodora. "I suppose he has dragged himself away somewheres. I know he was hit by the way he cried out."

"I did not aim right at the bush," said Tom; "but I suppose the gun may have scattered."

"Plague take him!" exclaimed Willis. "I don't much care if he is hit."

"Oh, don't talk so!" cried Ellen.

"No; don't talk so," said Catherine. "If he is hit and has crept away, we must find him if we can."

"Of course," said Addison who was peering about on the ground, "we will do all we can to find him and care for him, if it really was he."

"Halse! Halse!" Tom shouted, as loudly as he could. "Answer, Halse, if you are hurt! We will take care of you!"

There was no reply.

"He may be dead by this time!" lamented Theodora.

Then we began searching in earnest; we rekindled the fire, and taking brands, looked the ground all over for twenty rods or more from the cabins, in that direction. Not a trace could be discovered.

"I guess he wasn't hurt much," Willis said privately to me.

But that wild outcry had taken a dreadful hold on Theodora's fancies. With the tears starting constantly to her eyes, she searched and implored the rest of us to keep looking about. I half expected we might come upon Halse in the bushes; for I knew that if one of those heavy shot had struck him, it might cause a fatal wound.

Tom, too, felt very badly and very nervous; so did Kate.

At last we went back to the cabin, for it seemed of no use to search longer. Theodora was so wrought

up, that she even wanted to start off for home in the darkness, to notify the Old Squire. Nothing could persuade her that Halse was not wounded or killed.

But Addison said at once that we could not think of making such a trip in the night; that we would wait till morning and see what could be discovered then; and he advised the girls to go to sleep and get as good a night's rest as they could.

"It will do no good to cry, or keep awake, Doad," he said. "We can do nothing till daylight."

Accordingly we went to our own cabin and left the girls to shut themselves into theirs and sleep if they could. We all felt very much disturbed; yet I, for one, fell asleep and slept through the rest of the night quite soundly. I doubt whether Theodora slept, however. She was awake and out with Addison long before I roused up. Catherine and Ellen, too, were astir, and they had all four been searching, ever since it had grown light enough.

Willis had gone to fish for trout; he came back with a fine string of them, just as I was waking up. As he sat dressing them to fry for breakfast, he declared again that he was not at all afraid that Halse was much injured.

But all the rest of us had our fears, and not much interest was felt in breakfast or anything else, save to get ready to start for home, as quickly as possible. For Addison had decided that the best thing to do, under the circumstances, was to go home and see what could be learned there of Halse's movements.

We therefore ate a breakfast of such food as could be most quickly prepared, then packed up our luggage, and began our long trip back home, through the woods. It was far from being a pleasant walk. The zest and anticipation of our outing had departed. We plodded drearily on and reached Clear Pond at about one o'clock. Here, after a hasty lunch, Addison ran on ahead, to reach home and come back with the team.

The entire burden of the baskets, guns, etc., now fell on Tom, Willis and me; the girls were tired, and we got on slowly.

At last, after two or three hours, we heard Addison coming along the winter road with the horses and wagon, while still at a considerable distance. The girls sat down to wait for him to come near enough to speak. Theodora, in particular, feared the worst.

But as soon as Addison came in sight, where we were sitting on a log by the side of the trail, he swung his hat, and shouted, "All right!"

"Thank Providence!" burst from Theodora's lips; and we all jumped up and shouted for joy.

"But was it Halse?" exclaimed Tom and Kate and I, all in a breath.

"Yes, it was," replied Addison with a touch of scorn in his voice. "He and Alf Batchelder."

"And he isn't hurt?" Theodora asked.

"Well, no, not by *us*," said Addison dryly. "The Old Squire has held a private interview with him out at the west barn. Halse may not be quite as comfortable now as he might be."

"Good enough!" shouted Willis, Tom and Kate in chorus; and I am afraid that Ellen and I joined in the sentiment. Theodora only looked unhappy.

"Halse has confessed," Addison continued, after we were all in the wagon, jogging on homeward. "The Old Squire made him tell everything and disciplined him afterwards. It was like this. After dinner yesterday, Halse pretended that he was sick and went upstairs. Gram followed him up there with the Vermifuge bottle. She found him in bed. He wouldn't say what ailed him. After she went downstairs, he got out on the ell roof and ran away, over to Batchelder's. Alf and he then put their heads together and started for the old slave's farm, intending to play they were Cannucks and frighten us nearly to death. That was old Hewey's moose-horn that they were

booing through; they borrowed it of the old man, on their way up, pretending they were going moose-hunting."

"Then Halse wasn't hit after all," said Kate.

"No; it was Alf. We were all wrong about that voice. One of Tom's little partridge shot struck Alf on his wrist. It did not injure him much, but drew blood and frightened him.

"They then cut sticks for home; and Halse tried to get into his room over the ell roof at about three o'clock this morning. But our folks had already discovered that he had run away. The Old Squire heard him on the roof and nabbed him just as he was crawling in at the window.

"He was quite a subdued, tearful-eyed, peaceable-looking boy, when I saw him an hour ago," Addison concluded, with a curl of his lip.

"But let's not say a word to plague him any further," said Theodora.

"Oh, I shall not speak of it," replied Addison.

"Nor I," said Willis. "But I would like to have had hold of the Old Squire's whip a spell."

And thus, in this miserable way, our first camping trip terminated. It was raining the following morning and continued very wet for several days; we were not able to return to "the old slave's farm" that fall.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE OLD SQUIRE'S PANTHER STORY

IT seemed good, even after only three days' camping out, to sit down in the house again and see the supper table nicely set and Gram at the head of it. She welcomed us home as warmly as if we had been absent for weeks; the Old Squire was still a little disturbed, from his recent "interview" with Halstead.

Halse, himself, did not come to supper; and nobody mentioned his name during the entire evening.

Little Wealthy was plainly overjoyed to see us back and, despite the pout which she had worn when we went off without her, talked very fast to us and told us of all the occurrences during our absence.

"Aunt Olive" was with us for a week; she and Gram and Wealthy had begun to dry apples; and after supper, Aunt Olive brought in three bushel basketfuls of bruised Baldwins and Greenings, along with some natural fruit; she also produced the old paring machine, coring knives and a hank of stringing twine and needle, and in short made ready for a busy evening.

"Now, young folks," quoth she, "you've been off and had a fine time; and I s'pose you're all ready to make the apples fly! It will not take us long to do up these three bushels to-night, if you all work smart."

It was an invitation not to be refused, under the circumstances, though Theodora and Ellen made wry

faces. They disliked to cut apples, it is such dirty, sticky work and blackens one's hands so badly. Addison took up the paring machine, good-naturedly.

"Here's my old friend of last year," said he, screwing it to the leaf of the kitchen table. "I pared bushels with it last fall, and I guess I'll pare them now, while the rest of you trim and core and string them. We must have dried apples, I suppose, for pies and sauce; at least, Gram says we must."

He fixed an apple on the fork of the machine and then in a moment had whirled the skin off it, in a long, thin ribbon which descended into the basket set beneath the table. I thought it looked to be fun; — but that was before I understood the business as well as I subsequently came to do.

Finding that we had mustered in good force to cut the apples, Gram got out her basket of socks to darn and presently summoned Theodora to assist her. The Old Squire sat at the other side of the table and began to read his *Maine Farmer,* which had come that night from the post office; but he stopped reading often to hear what Addison had to tell of our trip. Ellen and I trimmed and halved the apples, as Addison pared them; "Aunt Olive" cored and Wealthy strung the cored halves.

At length, when Gramp seemed to have looked his paper pretty nearly through, Theodora said that we had a particular favor to ask of him that evening.

"Ah!" said the old gentleman, looking over the top of his glasses. "What can Theodora want?"

"But I want you to promise to grant it before I tell what it is," replied Theodora.

The Old Squire laughed. "That's asking quite a good deal," he remarked. "But I hope I am not running much risk."

"Well, then, grandfather," said Theodora, "we all want you to tell us the story of the panther that you and Mr. Edwards shot up in the great woods when you

were boys. Thomas and Catherine have been telling us about it; and we want to hear the story."

"Yes, sir," said Addison. "Please tell us about that."

The old gentleman hedged a little. "Oh, that is not much of a story," said he.

"Come, Squire, I've heard tell o' that 'ere catamount that you and Zeke Edwards killed; but I never could get the particulars," said Aunt Olive. "Jest give us the particulars."

Gramp tried to put us off. "I'm no great hand at stories," he said. "You must get Hewey Glinds to tell you bear and catamount stories."

"But you promised me, Gramp," Theodora reminded him.

At length, after some further excuses, the Old Squire was induced to make a beginning, and having begun, told us the following story which I give in words as nearly like his own as I can now remember.

"It was in the year 1812. I was little more than a boy at that time, and the country was quite new here. We had a clearing of about fifty acres and had not yet built our present buildings; and our only neighbors, nearer than the settlement in the lower part of the township, where the village now stands, were the Edwardses. Old Jeremy Edwards came here at about the same time that my father came.

"Eighteen-twelve was the time of our second war with England. Soldiers for it did not volunteer then; troops had to be raised by draft. Father and neighbor Edwards were both drafted. I well remember the night they were summoned. Mother and Mrs. Edwards cried all night. But there was no help for it. There were no such things as substitutes then. They had to go the next morning, and leave us to take care of ourselves the best we could.

"Little Ezekiel Edwards — Thomas's and Kate's grandfather — was just about my age; and the men

being away, everything depended on us. Those were hard times; we had a great deal to do. We used to change works, as we called it, so as to be together as much as we could; for it was rather lonesome, planting and hoeing off in the stumpy, sprouted clearings. That was a long, anxious summer! We heard from father only once. He was somewhere near Lake Champlain.

"We were getting things fixed up to pass the winter as well as we could, when one night, about the first of November, Ezekiel came running over to ask if we had seen anything of old Brindle, their cow. It had been a bright, Indian-summer day, and they had turned her out to feed; but she had not come up as usual, and was nowhere in sight. It was dusk already, but I took our gun and, starting out together, we searched both clearings. Brindle was not in the cleared land.

"'We shall have to give her up to-night, Zeke,' said I; 'but I will go with you in the morning. She's lost or hedged up somewhere among windfalls.' We heard 'lucivees' snarling, and as we went back along, saw a bear digging ground-nuts beside a great rock. These were common enough sounds and sights in those days; still, we did not care to go off into the forest after dark.

"Several inches of snow came during the night and the next morning was cloudy and lowering. Zeke came over early. Brindle had not come in. He brought his gun and had taken Skip, their dog; and we now started off for a thorough search in the woods. Everything looked very odd that morning, on account of the freshly fallen snow. The snow had lodged upon all the trees, especially the evergreens, bending down the branches; and every stump and bush was wreathed in white.

"As the cows used frequently to follow up the valley — where the road now is — to the northward, we

entered it and kept on to where it opens out upon Clear Pond, at the foot of the crags which you probably noticed as you passed. There is just a footpath between the crags and the pond, which is very deep on that side. About the pond and the crag the trees were mostly spruce. This morning they looked like multitudes of white tents, lined with black. And this appearance, with the ground all white, and the not yet frozen water looking black as ink, made everything appear so strange, that although we had several times been there before, we now scarcely knew the place.

"As yet we had seen no traces of Brindle. But just as we came out on the pond, at the foot of the crag, we heard a fox bark, quite near at first, then at a distance. Skip sprang ahead among the snowy spruces, but came back in a few moments, and, looking up in our faces, whined, then ran on again.

"'He's found something!' exclaimed Zeke.

"We hurried forward on his track, and a few rods further, saw him standing still, whining; and there, under a thin covering of snow, near the water, lay old Brindle, torn and mangled, and partially eaten.

"A feeling of awe crept over us at the sight.

"'Dead!' whispered Zeke.

"'Something's killed her!' I whispered back.

"There were fresh fox tracks all around, and the carcass had been recently gnawed in several places. Some transient little fox had been improving the chance to steal a breakfast. But what savage beast had throttled resolute old Brindle?

"With strange sensations we gazed around. Not a breath of air stirred the snow-laden boughs; and the wild, gray face of the precipice, towering above us, seemed to grow awesome in the stillness.

"Looking more closely, we now discerned, partially obscured by the more recent snowflakes, some broad footprints, as large as old Brindle's hoofs, leading off

along the narrow path between the crag and the pond. After examining our priming, we followed slowly on these tracks, Skip keeping close to us, and glancing up earnestly in our faces.

"Very soon, however, the tracks stopped. Beyond a certain point there were no footprints. Skip whined, almost getting under our feet in his efforts to keep near us. Suddenly then a piercing scream broke the stillness, and on a jutting rock, fully twenty feet above us, and in the very attitude of springing, we saw a large gray creature, its claws protruding on the ledge, its ears laid back and its long tail switching to and fro! It screamed again, then leaped down. Zeke and I started to run back along the path, but both stumbled on the snowy rocks. Next moment we heard a yell from Skip, then a loud growl. The panther had seized him; and then we saw it go bounding back up the rocks, grappling and gathering up the dog in its mouth, at every leap. Climbing still higher, it gained a projecting ledge, along which it ran to a great cleft, or fissure, seventy or eighty feet above the path. There it disappeared.

"Its onslaught had been so sudden, that for some moments we stood bewildered. Then, remembering our danger, we turned to run again, but had taken only a few steps when another scream rooted us to the path! The panther had come out in sight and was running to the place where it had climbed up.

"Frightened as we were, we knew that it was of little use to run and both pulled up. As long as we stood still, the animal crouched, watching us; but the moment we stirred, it would rise and poise itself as if to spring. We were afraid if we ran that the animal would bound down and chase us.

"How long we stood there, I don't know, but it seemed very long. We grew desperate. 'Let's fire,' Zeke whispered; and we raised our old flint-locks. They were well charged with buckshot, if they would

only go off. The panther growled, seeing the movement, and started up; but we pulled the triggers. Both guns were discharged. We then sprang away down the path, but glancing back, beheld the panther struggling and clinging to one of the lower ledges to which it had jumped, or fallen, from the rocks above.

"'We hit him!' exclaimed Zeke. 'Hold up,'— and we both turned.

"For a long time the beast clung there, writhing and falling back. Screech after screech echoed from the mountain side across the pond. We could see blood trickling down the rock.

"The animal grew weaker, at length, and by and by fell down to another rock, where, after fainter struggles and cries, it finally lay still. We loaded and fired again, and the fur flew up, but there was no further movement. Skip and Brindle were avenged, as much as they could be; but it was a long time before the Edwards family ceased to lament their loss.

"We went to the place twice afterwards during the winter. A mass of gray fur was still lying on the rock, thirty or forty feet above the path. And for years after, we could see some of the panther's bones there."

To us young folks who had so recently been camping in the "great woods" and had passed along the foot of this very crag where the panther had been shot, the Old Squire's story was intensely interesting. We could vividly imagine the scene and the fears of the two pioneer boys, on that snowy November forenoon, more than fifty years ago.

When I went up to bed that night, I found Halse soundly asleep. He did not wake and I did not disturb him; but he was astir and dressing, when I waked next morning, and before we went down, he began to laugh and to ridicule us, on account of the fright we were in at the cabin when those stones were tumbling on the roof. "And I broke up your camping trip, anyway," he added, exultantly. "You were the scaredest

lot of chickens I ever saw! Shut yourselves up in your shanty and fastened the door with props!"

I did not much blame him for wanting to crow a bit, after all that had happened.

On the whole it was fortunate that we came home when we did. The storm continued; all next day it poured and drove furiously; but apple-cutting went on blithely in-doors. What was rare for him, Addison had a bad cold with a very sore throat; and we all retired early that night, not having as yet caught up all arrears of broken sleep from the camping trip.

But it was not to be a night of rest; and I for one was destined to have an exciting experience before morning. Shortly after midnight there came an obstreperous knocking and thumping at the outer door, so loud that it waked us in our beds upstairs. It was repeated twice; and then I heard the Old Squire below call out, "Who's there?"

"It's me," replied a troubled voice.

"Well, but who's 'me?'"

"Bobbie Sylvester. And please, sir, my folks want you to send one of the boys after the doctor, quick!"

There was a sudden exclamation of wrath and indignation from Addison in his room, with a chain of comments, which it is not necessary to remember.

"Why, what's the matter?" we heard the Old Squire call out. But just then we distinguished the murmur of Gram's voice, and a moment later heard her coming up the stairs to speak to us.

"Boys," said she, "one of you must ride to the village after the doctor for Mrs. Sylvester."

"But, Gram, it's a terrible night," Ad expostulated.

"I know it, boys," said she. "It's a bad night, but somebody must go."

"Let Sylvester go himself, then!" cried Addison, angrily.

"Well, but you know he hasn't any horse, and has rheumatism," said the old lady.

Then began to dawn on me what I came to know full well later, that whenever certain of our poorer neighbors were taken ill, or an additional small member was about to be added to their families, they were very prone to come hurrying to our door at dead of night, beseeching some of us to ride seven miles to the village for the doctor.

Addison was really unfit to go. No doubt he felt unusually irritable. "By the holy smoke!" he exclaimed. "I wish there wasn't a baby under the Canopy!" — and while I was trying to puzzle out and piece together all these darkling hints and inferences, the Old Squire came up stairs and after a word with Addison and Gram, told me that I would have to rig up, get on old Sol's back and take my first turn riding for Dr. Cummings. That settled it.

Thereupon I began dressing in haste, Halstead lying at his ease and crowing over me as I did so; and I am sorry to add that I was in a mood so un-cousinly that I at length gave him a swipe with my thick jacket as I put it on to hasten down stairs.

It was still raining fiercely; but they rigged me up as best they could for the trip — buttoned me into an old buffalo coat (it was a huge fit for a boy, thirteen), tied a woollen comforter around my neck, and another one over the top of my cap, to hold that on my head and keep my ears warm. Wool socks, a pair of large boots, and some heavy mittens completed my outfit.

Gram herself went to the stable and looked to the saddle. I mounted; Gramp pulled the great door of the stable open, and I rode forth into the rain and darkness.

After a few moments outside, I could see objects, in outline. So much rain had fallen that the road was completely saturated. I got on pretty well, however, until I came to the meadow a mile from home, where the road crossed low ground and a large brook. There was a plank-bridge here twenty feet long. The

brook was now very high — a good deal higher, in fact, than any of us had anticipated. It had risen several feet since nightfall.

The moment I came to the meadow I found that there was water all over it, and also in the road, extending back two hundred yards from the bridge to the foot of the hill. I could not see how it looked, and, of course, did not fully realize how high and rapid the stream had grown. Old Sol splashed through the water till we came near the bridge. There the water was up to my feet, in the road. On pulling up, I could hear it rushing and swirling along over the bridge. I supposed the bridge was undisturbed, for there were stones laid on the planks at each end. I could see nothing save a black expanse all round me. Hesitating a moment, I summoned my courage and dug my heels into old Sol's sides. He went forward till his feet touched the first planks. There he stopped and snorted. I gave him the spur. He leaped forward and seemed to strike his feet on planks. But, as was afterwards ascertained, some of them were washed out, and all of them were afloat. At his next spring his legs went down among them. Then the full force of the current struck him, he rolled over sidewise, and horse and boy went off the lower end of the bridge, in eight feet of swift water.

It is needless to say that I was holding to the horse's mane for dear life. As we rolled over the " stringer " of the bridge, I was partly under the horse. We went down and I distinctly touched bottom with my left foot, but clutched the horse's mane with both hands and hugged the saddle with both legs. It seemed to me that we rolled over before we came to the surface. Then we went under again, but a moment later, the horse got foothold in shallower water, and floundered out on the further side of the brook.

If I had let go of him I would certainly have been drowned; for the skirts of the buffalo coat had been

driven by the current over my head, and with all those water-soaked clothes on, not even a powerful swimmer could have got out. I felt as if I weighed a ton. My cap was gone, and with it, my comforters.

I wasn't very much frightened, I hadn't had time to be, though I remember thinking when we rolled off the end of the bridge, that no doctor would get to the Sylvesters' that night.

The horse waded off the meadow to a set of bars, and we got back into the road; and on coming to the foot of the hill I dismounted and partly wrung some of my clothes, though it still rained heavily. If I had not been on the further side of the stream, I'm sure I would have gone home, for I felt awfully cold and homesick.

The road was badly gullied, and I had still another brook to cross; but the stream there was not so rapid, and after reconnoitering the bridge as well as I could in the dark, I ventured upon it, and found that I could pass.

I do not think that I was more than an hour and a half reaching the village. It was so dark that I had difficulty in finding the doctor's house, though I knew the place. A moment later I dismounted, and knocked at his door. After a while a window was raised, and Dr. Cummings asked what was wanted. I told him, and I can safely assert that he did not seem overjoyed.

"How are the roads?" he asked, after some hesitation.

"Pretty bad."

"Hum! And the bridges?"

I replied that I thought one of them had been washed away.

"Washed away? How did you get over then?"

"My horse swam."

"Well, I'll tell you," said the doctor. "I'm about used up, and have just come in from a hard ride.

You call Dr. Green. He's a young man, just settled here. I don't want to be hoggish with him. Call Dr. Green."

Dr. Green was a young homœopathist who had come to the village the year before. It was said that Dr. Cummings did not like him, also that Dr. Green reciprocated the sentiment.

"Shall I tell Dr. Green that you sent me for him?" I asked, as I got on my horse.

Dr. Cummings did not reply.

I then went to Dr. Green's door, and did my errand there. "Have you been for Dr. Cummings?" was his first question.

"Yes," said I, "and he sent me to you."

"He's a shirk," said the young doctor, "but I'll go."

He came out directly, saddled his own horse and set off with me, asking no questions about the road. It still rained, and the wind was in our faces. I led the way. The doctor followed. He kept up pretty well. He had on a suit of yellow oil-skin, and I could see that some ways back.

When we got to the hill near the meadow, I pulled up and told him about the bridge. "You can try it," said I, "if you want to, but I am going to wait till it gets light before I try it again."

"You are a pretty fellow," said he. "Why didn't you tell me of that before?"

"I was afraid you might not come," said I, "and it was my business to get a doctor."

"Go ahead, then," said he, grittily. "Let's try it."

"No, thank you," said I. "Once in that brook is enough for me, in one night."

"Well, then," said he, "do you know any other bridge or ford?"

I knew of a bridge two miles above. The road was like porridge, but we reached it, tried it carefully, and at length got across without swimming. The remainder of the way was comparatively uneventful;

and we reached the Sylvesters' just as day began to dawn. Four old ladies were there, including Gram. They greeted the doctor with great glee. He was late — but all was well.

Nevertheless, that was a good trip for young Dr. Green. The folks thereabouts said that he must be a staunch young fellow to turn out on such a night. I always felt that they might have added a word for me, too.

The doctor told me a while ago that that ride was worth a thousand dollars to him.

"Well, then, doctor, suppose we divide that thousand," I said.

"Why?" said he. "What for?"

"Well, I went after you that night, and piloted you up there," said I.

"That's true," said he, "but you must collect your fee of the patients, as I do."

"Little there's left for me when you are done with them," said I.

I found my cap and comforters about a fortnight after that, in the top of some choke-cherry bushes below the bridge.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE OUTLAW DOGS

NOT a little farm work still remained to be done; — our farm work, in fact, was never done. For a fortnight after our return from the camping trip, we were busy, ploughing stubble ground, drawing off loose stones and building a piece of "double wall" along the side of the north field. There was also a field of winter rye to be got in. The Old Squire was, moreover, preparing to re-embark in the lumbering business at certain lots of timber land which he owned up in the "great woods." Loggers would be hired for this work, however, for Addison, Halstead and I expected to attend the district school which was announced to begin on the Monday after Thanksgiving.

It was mostly dull, hard work now, all day long, and often we were obliged to husk corn, or dry apples, during the evening. The only amusement for a time was one or two husking parties, and an "apple bee" at the Murches'.

On the morning of the 30th of October we waked to find the ground white with snow; several inches had fallen; but it went off, after a day or two; the weather had grown quite cold, however. Ice formed nearly every night. The cattle were now at the barns, but the sheep were still running about the pastures and fields. On the night of the 5th of November the upper part of the lake froze over, as well as the smaller ponds in the vicinity. I found that the boys thereabouts knew how to skate, and was not long in buying a pair

of skates, myself. I had much difficulty in learning to use them for several days; at length, I caught the knack of it, and felt well repaid for a good many hard falls, when at last I could glide away and keep up with Halse, Addison and Thomas Edwards, who skated well. Even Theodora and Ellen could skate.

For a week that fall Lake Pennesseewassee was grand skating ground. Parties of boys from a distance came there every evening and built bonfires on the shore to enliven the scene.

I think that it was the third day before Thanksgiving that eight of us went to the lake, at about four in the afternoon, to have an hour of skating before dark. We found Alfred Batchelder there in advance of us. As Alfred did not now speak to our boys, he kept a little aloof from us.

Near the head of the lake is an island and above it a bog. We had skated around the head of the lake, and keeping to the east side of the island, circled about it, and were coming down on the west side along an arm, some two hundred yards wide, where there was known to be deep water. We thought the ice perfectly firm and safe there, since that on the east side of the island, over which we had just skated, had proved so. All of us were at full racing speed, and Alfred was keeping six or eight rods further out, but parallel with us. Suddenly we heard a crash and saw Alfred go down. The water gushed up around him.

There was no premonitory cracking or yielding. The ice broke on the instant; and so rapidly was he moving that a hole twelve or fifteen feet long was torn by the sheer force with which he went against it. As he fell through, he went under once, but luckily came up in the hole he had made, and got his hands and arms on the edges of the ice, which, however, kept bending down and breaking off. The breaking and his fall were so sudden that he had not even time to cry out till he came up and caught hold of the ice.

Instinctively we all sheered off toward the west shore at first. Then came the impulse to save him. A peeled hemlock log lay stranded on the shore upon rocks, with about four feet of its length frozen in the ice. I remember rushing to this, to get it up and slide it out to him. Finding I could not wrench it loose with my hands, I kicked it with first one foot and then the other, and broke both my skates; but the ice held it like a vise. Then I started on my broken skates to find a pole; two or three of the other boys were also running for poles, shouting excitedly.

All the while Alfred was calling despairingly to us; every time the ice broke, he would nearly disappear under the water, which was deadly cold.

Addison who had first pulled off his skates, then thought of green alder poles. Running to the nearest clump, he bent down and hurriedly cut off two, each as large as a pump-brake. Before I was done kicking the peeled hemlock log, or Halse was back from his pole hunt, Addison had shoved one of the long alders out to Alf, who managed to clutch hold of it.

Addison had hold of the butt end, and Willis Murch, nearer the shore, had reached out the top of the second alder to Addison. The ice yielded somewhat and the water came up; but they all held fast. By this time the rest of us had cut more alders, one of which was thrust out to Willis; and then by main strength we hauled Alfred out and back where the ice was firmer.

It is doubtful whether we should have got him out of the lake but for this expedient; for the water was so cold and the wind so bitterly sharp, that he could not long have supported himself by those bending ice edges. His teeth chattered noisily when at length we hauled him ashore; Addison's, too! Both were wet through. We started and ran as hard as we could towards home. Two of us had to drag Alf at the start; but he ran better after the first hundred yards;

and we were all very warm by the time we got him home.

It is often difficult to determine why the ice on some portions of a pond should be thin and treacherous, as in the above instance, while on other portions it is quite safe. Indeed, there is no way of determining except by cautious inspection.

I must do Alfred the justice to record that he came around quite handsomely to thank Addison, and then asked his pardon for the hard words that he had used at Fair time.

The morning following is marked forever in my memory by an unexpected trip up to the "great woods" — the result of certain disturbing rumors which had been in circulation throughout the autumn, but of which I have not previously spoken, since they were confined mainly to a school district two miles to the east of the Old Squire's farm.

On that morning a party of not less than thirty men and boys, with hounds, was made up to go in pursuit of a pack of outlaw dogs which had been killing sheep and calves in that town and vicinity. As yet the flocks in our own neighborhood had not been molested, but there was no saying how soon the marauders might pay us a visit; and a public effort had been inaugurated to hunt the pack down and destroy it.

The history of these dog outlaws was a singular one and parallels in canine life the famous story of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." The fact that dogs do occasionally lead double lives — one that of a docile house-dog by day, and the other that of a wild, dangerous beast by night — is well established. In this case a trusted dog had become not only an outlaw himself, but drew others about him and was the leader of a dangerous band.

A farmer named Frost, three miles from us, began to lose sheep from a flock of seventy which he owned and which were kept in a pasture that included a high

hill and sloped northward over rough, bushy land to the great woods. It was not the custom there to enclose the sheep in pens or shelters, at night. They wandered at will in the pasture, and were rarely visited oftener than once a week, and that usually on Sunday morning. Then either the farmer or one of his boys would go to the pasture to give the sheep salt and count them. This was the custom among the farmers in that locality, nearly all of whom owned flocks sometimes as small as twenty, but rarely larger than seventy-five, since sheep in New England do not thrive when kept in large flocks.

Farmer Frost was not the only one who had lost sheep at this time. Six other flocks were invaded, but his loss occurred first. His son Rufus, going to the pasture to salt and count the sheep on a Sunday morning, found that two ewes and a grown lamb were missing. Later in the day the partially devoured remains of the sheep were found in the pasture not far from a brook.

"Bear's work," the farmer and his neighbors said, although an old hunter who visited the spot pronounced against the theory. But a bear had been seen recently in the vicinity; and Monday morning the Frost boys loaded their guns for a thorough hunt. Two traps were also set near the carcasses, which were left as found, to lure the destroyer back.

The destroyer did not return; the traps remained as they were set; and the youthful hunters were unsuccessful in rousing a bear in the woods. But on the following Wednesday night a farmer named Needham, living a mile and a half from Frost, lost two sheep, the bodies of which were found in his pasture, partly eaten.

It chanced that Farmer Needham, or his son Emerson, owned a dog which was greatly prized. They called him Bender. Bender was said to be a half-breed, Newfoundland and mastiff, but had, I think, a strain of more common blood in his ancestry, for there was a

tawny crescent mark beneath each of his eyes. Bender was the pink of propriety and a dog of unblemished reputation.

On this occasion Bender went with the farmer and his boys to the sheep pasture, and smelled the dead sheep with every appearance of surprise and horror. The hair on his shoulders bristled with indignation. He coursed around, seeking for bear tracks, and ran barking about the pasture. In short, he did everything that a properly grieved dog should do under the circumstances, and so far from touching or eating any of the torn mutton, he plainly scorned such a thing.

The boys took Bender with them to hunt bears, as their main reliance and ally, and Bender hunted assiduously. Three or four other dogs, belonging at farms in the vicinity, were also taken on these hunts. One was a collie, another a mongrel bulldog, and a third a large brindled dog of no known pedigree. Still another half-bred St. Bernard dog set off with the others, but on reaching the sheep pasture, where they went first to get the trail and make a start, this latter dog behaved oddly, left the others and slunk away home.

Some of the boys attributed this to cowardice, and he was hooted; others suspected Roke, for that was his name, of having killed the sheep. Suspicion against him so increased that his master kept him chained at home.

No bears were tracked to their dens, and none were caught in the traps, which were also set in the Needham pasture; but less than a week later another farmer, this time the owner of the mongrel bulldog, lost three sheep in one night. As previously, the sheep were found dead and partly eaten.

If Roke's *alibi* had not had a tangible chain at one end of it that night, his character would have been as good as lost; for his refusal to hunt with the other dogs and the manner in which he behaved while near

the dead sheep, had rendered him a public " suspect." When near the carcasses he had growled morosely, and shown his teeth. When barked at by the other dogs, he had taken himself off.

A few nights afterward Farmer Frost lost two more sheep from his flock in the pasture, and the following night Rufus watched in the pasture with a loaded gun, quite without results.

About that time two or three others watched in their pastures. Some shut up their sheep. But the losses continued to occur. Within a radius of three or four miles as many as twenty-four sheep were killed in the course of three weeks.

None of the watchers by night or the hunters by day had, as yet, obtained so much as a trace or a clue to the animal which had done the killing. They came to think that it was quite useless to watch by night; the marauding creature, whether bear, wild-cat, or dog, was apparently too wily, or too keen-scented, to enter a pasture and approach a flock where a man was concealed.

Rufus Frost, who had watched repeatedly, then hit on a stratagem. First he cut off about a foot from the barrel of a shotgun, to shorten it, and then made a kind of bag, or sack, by sewing two sheep-pelts together. Thus equipped, he repaired to the pasture after dark, and joined himself to the flock, not as a watcher, *but as a sheep*. That is to say, he crept into the sheepskin bag, which was also capacious enough to contain the short gun, and lay down on the outskirts of the flock, a little aloof.

The sheep were lying in a group, ruminating, as is their habit, by night. Rufus drew a tangle of wool over his head, and otherwise contrived to pose as a sheep lying down. He assumed that when thus bagged up in fresh sheepskin, the odor of a sheep would be diffused, and the appearance of one so well counterfeited as to deceive even a bear. His gun he had

charged heavily with buckshot; and altogether the ruse was ingenious, if nothing more.

Nothing disturbed the flock on the first night that he spent in the pasture, nor on the second; but he resolved to persevere. It was no very bad way to pass an autumn night; the weather was pleasant and warm, and there was a bright moon nearing its full.

He had kept awake during the first night, listening and watching for the most of the time; but he caught naps the second, and on the third was sleeping comfortably at about two in the morning, when he was suddenly set upon, tooth and nail, by what he believed, on first waking, to be a whole family of bears. One had him by the leg, through the bag, shaking him. Another was dragging at the back of the bag, while the teeth of a third were snapping at his face. Still other teeth were chewing upon his arm, and the growling was something frightful!

This was an alarming manner in which to be wakened from a sound nap, and it is little wonder that Rufus, although a plucky youngster, rolled over and over and yelled with the full power of his lungs.

His shouts produced an effect. First one and then another of his assailants let go and drew back; and getting the wool out of his eyes, Rufus saw that the creatures were not bears, but four astonished dogs, standing a few feet away, regarding him with doubt and disgust.

To all appearance he had been a sheep, lying a little apart from the others, and they had fallen upon him as one; but his shouts led them to think that he was not mutton, after all, and they did not know what to make of it!

Rufus, almost equally astonished, now lay quite still, staring at them. The dogs looked at each other, licked the wool from their mouths, and sat down to contemplate him further.

Rufus, on his part, waxed even more amazed as he

looked, for by the bright moonlight he at once identified the four dogs. They were, alas! the highly respectable, exemplary old Bender, the collie, Tige, the brindle, and the mongrel bulldog — all loved and trusted members of society. Rufus was so astonished that he did not think of using his blunderbuss; he simply whistled.

That whistle appeared to resolve the doubts of the dogs instantly. They growled menacingly and sprang away like the wind. Rufus saw them run across the pasture to the woods, and afterward, for some minutes, heard them washing themselves in the brook, as roguish, sheep-killing dogs always do before returning home.

But in this case the dogs appeared to know that they had been detected, and that so far as their characters as good and virtuous dogs went, the game was up. Not one of them returned home. All four took to the woods, and thereafter lived predatory lives. They were aware of the gravity of their offences.

During October and early November they were heard of as a pack of bad sheep-killers, time and again; but they now followed their evil practices at a distance from their former homes, where, indeed, the farmers took the precaution of carefully guarding their sheep. On one night of October they killed three calves in a farmer's field, four miles from the Frost farm. Several parties set off to hunt them, but they escaped and lived as outlaws, subsisting from nocturnal forays until snow came, when they were tracked to a den beneath a high crag, called the "Overset," up in the great woods.

It was Rufus Frost and Emerson Needham, the former owner of Bender, who tracked the band to their retreat. Finding it impossible to call or drive the criminals out, they blocked the entrance of the den with large stones, and then came home to devise some way of destroying them — since it is a pretty well-

established fact that when once a dog has relapsed into the savage habits of his wild ancestry he can never be reclaimed.

Someone had suggested suffocating the dogs with brimstone fumes; and so, early the following morning, Rufus and Emerson, heading a party of fifteen men and boys, came to the Edwards farm and the Old Squire's to get brimstone rolls, which we had on account of our bees. Their coming, on such an errand, carried a wave of excitement with it. Old Hewey Glinds, the trapper, was sent for and joined the party, in spite of his rheumatism. Every boy in the neighborhood begged earnestly to go; and the most of us, on one plea and another, obtained permission to do so.

All told, I believe, there were thirty-one in the party, not counting dogs. Entering the woods we proceeded first to Stoss Pond, then through Black Ash Swamp, and thence over a mountainous wooded ridge to Overset Pond.

In fact we seemed to be going to the remote depths of the wilderness; and what a savage aspect the snowy evergreen forest wore that morning! At last, we came out on the pond. Very black it looked, for it was what is called a " warm pond." Ice had not yet formed over it. The snow-clad crag where the cave was, on the farther side, loomed up, ghostly white by contrast.

Rufus and Emerson had gone ahead and were there in advance of us; they shouted across to us that the dogs had not escaped. We then all hurried on over snowy stones and logs to reach the place.

It was a gruesome sort of den, back under an overhang of rocks fully seventy feet high. Near the dark aperture which the boys had blocked, numbers of freshly gnawed bones lay in the snow, which presented a very sinister appearance.

Those in advance had already kindled a fire of driftstuff not far away on the shore. The hounds and dogs which had come with the party, scenting the outlaw

dogs in the cave, were barking noisily; and from within could be heard a muffled but savage bay of defiance.

"That's old Bender!" exclaimed Emerson. "And he knows right well, too, that his time's come!"

"Suppose they will show fight?" several asked.

"Fight! Yes!" cried old Hewey, who had now hobbled up. "They'll fight wuss than any wild critters!"

One of the older boys, Ransom Frost, declared that he was not afraid to take a club and go into the cave.

"Don't you think of such a thing!" exclaimed old Hewey. "Tham's desperate dogs! They'd pitch onto you like tigers! Tham dogs know there's no hope for them, and they're going to fight — if they get the chance!"

It was a difficult place to approach, and several different plans of attack were proposed. When the two hounds and three dogs which had come up with us barked and scratched at the heavy, flat stones which Rufus and Emerson had piled in the mouth of the cave, old Bender and Tige would rush forward on their side of the obstruction, with savage growls. Yet when Rufus or any of the others attempted to steal up with their guns, to shoot through the chinks, the outlaws drew back out of sight, in the gloom. There was a fierceness in their growling such as I never have heard from other dogs.

The owner of Watch, the collie, now crept up close and called to his former pet. "I think I can call my dog out," said he.

He called long and endearingly, "Come, Watch! Come, good fellow! You know me, Watch! Come out! Come, Watch, come!"

But the outlawed Watch gave not a sign of recognition or affection; he stood with the band.

Tige's former master then tried the same thing, but elicited only a deep growl of hostility.

"Oh, you can whistle and call, but you won't get tham dogs to go back on one another!" chuckled old Hewey. "Tham dogs have taken an oath together. They won't trust ye and I swan I wouldn't either, if I was in their places! They know you are Judases!"

It was decided that the brimstone should be used. Live embers from the fire were put in the kettle. Green, thick boughs were cut from fir-trees hard by; and then, while the older members of the party stood in line in front of the hole beneath the rocks, to strike down the dogs if they succeeded in getting out, Rufus and Emerson removed a part of the stones, and with some difficulty introduced the kettle inside, amidst a chorus of ugly growls from the beleaguered outlaws. The brimstone was then put into the kettle, more fire applied, and the hole covered quickly with boughs. And now even we younger boys were allowed to bear a hand, scraping up snow and piling it over the boughs, the better to keep in the smoke and fumes.

The splutter of the burning sulphur could plainly be heard through the barrier, and also the loud, defiant bark of old Bender and the growls of Tige.

Very soon the barking ceased, and there was a great commotion, during which we heard the kettle rattle. This was succeeded presently by a fierce, throaty snarling of such pent-up rage that chills ran down the backs of some of us as we listened. After a few minutes this, too, ceased. For a little space there was complete silence; then began the strangest sound I ever heard.

It was like the sad moaning of the stormy wind, as we sometimes hear it in the loose window casements of a deserted house. Hardly audible at first, it rose fitfully, moaning, moaning, then sank and rose again. It was not a whine, as for pity or mercy, but a kind of canine farewell to life: the death-song of the outlaws. This, too, ceased after a time; but old Hewey did not advise taking away the boughs for fifteen or twenty minutes. "Make a sure job on't," he said.

Choking fumes issued from the cave for some time after it was opened and the stones pulled away. Bender was then discovered lying only a few feet back from the entrance. He appeared to have dashed the kettle aside, as if seeking to quench the fire and smoke. Tige was close behind him, Watch farther back. Very stark and grim all four looked when finally they were hauled out with a pole and hook and given a finishing shot.

It was thought best to burn the bodies of the outlaws. The fire on the shore was replenished with a great quantity of drift-wood, fir boughs and other dry stuff which we gathered, and the four carcasses heaved up on the pile. It was a calm day, but thick, dark clouds had by this time again overspread the sky, causing the pond to look still blacker. The blaze gained headway; and a dense column of smoke and sparks rose straight upward to a great height. Owing to the snow and the darkening heavens, the fire wore a very ruddy aspect, and I vividly recall how its melancholy crackling was borne along the white shore, as we turned away and retraced our steps homeward.

CHAPTER XXX

A HEARTFELT THANKSGIVING AND A MERRY YOUNG MUSE THAT VISITED US UNINVITED

THANKSGIVING was always a holiday at the old farm. Gram and the girls made extensive preparations for it and intended to have a fine dinner. Besides the turkey and chickens there were "spareribs" and great frying-panfuls of fresh pork which, at this cold season of the year, was greatly relished by us. On this present Thanksgiving-day, two of Gram's nephews and their wives were expected to visit us, as also several cousins of whom I had heard but vaguely.

It chanced, too, that on this occasion we had especially good reason to be thankful that we were alive to eat a Thanksgiving dinner of any kind, as I will attempt to relate. Up to the day before Thanksgiving the weather, with the exception of two light snow storms, had been bright and pleasant, and the snow had speedily gone off. On that day there came a change. The Indian-summer mildness disappeared. The air was very still, but a cold, dull-gray haze mounted into the sky and deepened and darkened. All warmth went out from beneath it. There was a kind of stone-cold chill in the air which made us shiver.

"Boys, there's a 'snow bank' rising," the Old Squire remarked at dinner. "The ground will close for the winter. Glad we put those boughs round the house yesterday and banked up the out-buildings."

The sky continued to darken as the vast, dim pall of leaden-gray cloud overspread it, and cold, raw gusts of wind began to sigh ominously from the northeast.

Gramp at length came out where we were wheeling in the last of the stove-wood. "Have you seen the sheep to-day?" he asked Addison. "There is a heavy snow storm coming on. The flock must be driven to the barn."

None of us had seen the sheep for several days; the flock had been ranging about; and Halse ran over to the Edwardses to learn whether they were there, but immediately returned, with Thomas who told us that he had seen our sheep in the upper pasture, early that morning, and theirs with them.

Immediately then we four boys rigged up in our thickest old coats and mittens, and set off — with salt dish — to get the sheep home. The storm had already obscured the distant mountains to eastward when we started; and never have I seen Mt. Washington and the whole Presidential Range so blackly silhouetted against the westerly sky as on that afternoon, from the uplands of the sheep pasture.

The pasture was a large one, containing nearly a hundred acres, and was partially covered by low copses of fir. Seeing nothing of the sheep there, we followed the fences around, then looked in several openings which, like bays, or fiords, extended up into the southerly border of the "great woods." And all the while Tom, who was bred on a farm and habituated to the local dialect concerning sheep, was calling, "Co'day, co'day, co'nanny, co'nan." But no answering ba-a-a was heard.

"They are not here," Addison exclaimed at length. "The whole flock has gone off somewheres."

"Most likely to 'Dunham's open,'" said Tom, "and that's two miles; but I know the way. Come on. We've got to get them."

We set off at a run, following Thomas along a trail through the forest across the upper valley of the Robbins Brook, but had not gone more than a mile when the storm came on, not large snowflakes, but thick and

fine, driven by wind. It came with a sudden darkening of the woods and a strange deep sound, not the roar of a shower, but like a vast elemental sigh from all the surrounding hills and mountains. The wind rumbled in the high, bare tree-tops and the icy pellets sifted down through the bare branches and rattled inclemently on the great beds of dry leaves.

"Shall we go back?" exclaimed Halse.

"No, no; come on!" Thomas exclaimed. "We've got to get those sheep in to-night."

We ran on; but the forest grew dim and obscure. "I think we have gone wrong," Addison said. "I 'most think we have," Thomas admitted. "I ought to have taken that other path, away back there." He turned and ran back, and we followed to where another forest path branched easterly; and here, making a fresh start, we hastened on again for fifteen or twenty minutes.

"Oughtn't we to be pretty near Dunham's open?" demanded Addison.

"Oh, I guess we will come to it," replied Tom. "It is quite a good bit to go."

Thereupon we ran on again for some time, and crossed two brooks. By this time the storm had grown so blindingly thick that we could see but a few yards in any direction. Still we ran on; but not long after, we came suddenly on the brink of a deep gorge which opened out to the left on a wide, white, frozen pond. Below us a large brook was plunging down the "apron" of a log dam.

Thomas now pulled up short, in bewilderment. Addison laughed. "Do you know where you are?" said he. "Tom, that is Stoss Pond and Stoss Pond stream. There's the log dam and the old camp where Adger's gang cut spruce last winter. I know it by those three tall pine stubs over yonder."

Tom looked utterly confused. "Then we are five miles from home," he said, at length.

"We had better go back, too, as quick as we can!" Halse exclaimed, shivering. "It's growing dark! The ground is covered with snow, now!"

Addison glanced around in the stormy gloom and shook his head. "Tom," said he, "I don't believe we can find our way back. In fifteen minutes more we couldn't see anything in the woods. We had better get inside that camp and build a fire in the old cook-stove."

"I don't know but that we had," Tom assented. "It's an awful night. Only hear the wind howl in the woods!"

We scrambled down the steep side of the gorge to the log camp, found the old door ajar and pushed in out of the storm. There was a strange smell inside, a kind of animal odor. By good fortune Addison had a few matches in the pocket of the old coat which he had worn, when we went on the camping-trip to the "old slave's farm." He struck one and we found some dry stuff and kindled a fire in the rusted stove. There were several logger's axes in the camp; and Tom cut up a dry log for fuel; we then sat around the stove and warmed ourselves.

"I expect that the folks will worry about us," Thomas said soberly.

"Well, it cannot be helped," replied Addison.

"But we haven't a morsel to eat here," said Halse. "I'm awfully hungry, too."

Thereupon Tom jumped up and began rummaging, looking in two pork barrels, a flour barrel and several boxes. "Not a scrap of meat and no flour," he exclaimed. "But here are a few quarts of white beans in the bottom of this flour barrel; and we have got the sheep salt. What say to boiling some beans? Here's an old kettle."

"Let's do it!" cried Halse.

A kettle of beans was put on and the fire kept up, as we sat around, for two or three hours. Meantime the

storm outside was getting worse. Fine snow was sifting into the old camp at all the cracks and crevices. The cold, too, was increasing; the roaring of the forest was at times awe-inspiring. On peeping out at the door, nothing could be discerned; snow like a dense white powder filled the air. Already a foot of snow had banked against the door; the one little window was whitened. Occasionally, above the roar in the tree-tops, could be heard a distant, muffled crash, and Tom would exclaim, "There went a tree!"

We got our beans boiled passably soft, after awhile, and being very hungry were able to eat a part of them, well salted. Boiled beans can be eaten, but they can never rank as a table luxury.

While chewing our beans, toward the end of the repast, an odd sound began to be heard, as of some animal digging at the door, also snuffling, whimpering sounds. We listened for some moments.

"Boys, you don't suppose that's Tyro, do you?" cried Tom at length. "I'll bet it is! He has taken my track and followed us away up here!" — and jumping up, Tom ran to the door. "Tyro" was a small dog owned at the Edwards homestead.

When, however, he opened the door a little, there crept in, whimpering, not Tyro, but a small, dark-colored animal, which the faint light given out from the stove scarcely enabled us to identify. The creature ran behind the barrels; and Tom clapped the door to. Addison lighted a splinter and we tried to see what it was; but it had run under the long bunk where the loggers once slept. After a flurry, we drove it out in sight again, when Tom shouted that it was a little "beezling" of a bear!

"Yes, sir-ee, that's a little runt of a bear cub," he cried. "He's been in this old camp before. That's what made it smell so when we came in."

Addison imagined that this cub had run out when he heard us coming to the camp, but that the severity

THE BEEZLING BEAR.

of the storm had driven it back to shelter. It was truly a poor little titman of a bear. At length we caught it and shut it under a barrel, placing a stone on the top head.

After our efforts cooking beans and the fracas with the "beezling bear," it must have been eleven o'clock or past, before we lay down in the bunk. The wind was still roaring fearfully, and the fine snow sifting down through the roof on our faces. In fact, the gale increased till past midnight. Addison said that he would sit by the stove and keep fire. Tom, Halse and I lay as snug as we could in the bunk, with our feet to the stove and presently fell asleep.

But soon a loud *crack* waked us, so harsh, so thrilling, that we started up. Addison had sprung to his feet with an exclamation of alarm. One of those great pine tree-stubs up the bank-side, above the camp, had broken short off in the gale. In falling, it swept down a large fir tree with it. Next instant they both struck with so tremendous a crash, one on each side of the camp, that the very earth trembled beneath the shock! The stove funnel came rattling down. We had to replace it as best we could.

It was not till daylight, however, that we fully realized how narrowly we had escaped death. A great tree trunk had fallen on each side of the camp, so near as to brush the eaves of the low roof. Dry stubs of branches were driven deep into the frozen earth. Either trunk would have crushed the old camp like an eggshell! The pine stub was splintered and split by its fall. There was barely the width of the camp between the two trunks, as they lay there prone and grim, in the drifted snow.

The gale slackened shortly after sunrise and the storm cleared in part; although snow still spit spitefully till as late as ten o'clock.

"What a Thanksgiving-day!" grumbled Halse.

After a time we started for home, leaving the little bear shut up. As much as two feet of snow had fallen on a level and the drifts in the hollows were much deeper. It was my first experience of the great snow storms of Maine; my legs soon ached with wallowing, and my feet were distressingly cold.

Our homeward progress was slow; none the less, Tom and Addison decided to go to Dunham's open, which was nearly a mile off our direct course, to look for the sheep. Now that it was light, they knew the way. Halse refused to go; and as my legs ached badly, he and I remained under a large fir tree beside the path, the fan-shaped branches of which, like all the other evergreens, were encrusted and loaded down by a white canopy.

Addison and Thomas set off and were gone for more than an hour, but had a large story to tell when they rejoined us. Not only had they found the flock, snow-bound, in Dunham's open, but had seen two deer which had joined the sheep during the storm. The whole flock was in a copse of firs, in the lee of the woods; and two loup-cerviers were sneaking about near by. Thomas declared that their tracks were as large as his hand; and Addison said that they had trodden a path in a semicircle around the flock.

We resumed our wallowing way home, but ere-long heard a distant shout. Addison replied and immediately we saw two men a long way off in the sheep pasture, advancing to meet us.

"I expect that one of them is my good dad," Thomas remarked dryly. "If I know my mother, she has been worrying about this cub of hers all night."

It proved to be farmer Edwards, as Tom had surmised, and with him the Old Squire, himself.

"Well, well, well, boys, where have you been all night?" was their first salutation to us.

Addison gave a brief account of our adventure; we

then proceeded homeward together, and were in time for Gram's Thanksgiving dinner at three o'clock, for which it is needless to say that we brought large appetites. But I recall that the pleasures of the table for me were somewhat marred by my feet which continued to ache and burn painfully for two or three hours.

There was a snowdrift six feet in depth before the farmhouse piazza. The drifts indeed had so changed the appearance of things around the house and yard that everything looked quite strange to me.

None of the guests, whom we had expected to dinner, came, on account of the storm; but a rumor of our adventure at the logging-camp had spread through the neighborhood; and at night, after the road had been "broken" with oxen, sled and harrow, Ned Wilbur and his sisters, the Murch boys, and also Tom and Catherine, called to pass the evening.

Perhaps the snow storm with its bewildering whiteness had turned our heads a little. That, or something else, started us off, making rhymes. After great efforts, amidst much laughter and profound knitting of brows, we produced what, in the innocence of youth, we called a poem! — an epic, on our adventure. I still preserve the old scrawl of it, in several different youthful hands, on crumpled sheets of yellowed paper. It has little value as poesy, but I would not part with it for autograph copies of the masterpieces of Kipling, or Aldrich.

It must have been akin to snow-madness, for I remember that Thomas who never attempted a line of poetry before, nor since, led off with the following stanzas: —

"Four boys went off to look for sheep,
Co'day, co'day, co'nanny, co'nan.
And the trouble they had would make you weep,
Co'day, co'day, co'nanny, co'nan.

"They searched the pasture high and low,
Then to Dunham's Open they tried to go.
But the sky was dark and the wind did blow
And the woods was dim with whirling snow.

"They lost their way and got turned round,
Co'day, co'day, co'nanny co'nan.
It's a wonder now they ever were found.
Co'day, co'day, co'nanny, co'nan.

"The storm howled round them wild and drear.
Stoss Pond did then by chance appear.
They all declared 'twas 'mazing queer.
'We're lost,' said Captain Ad, 'I fear.'"

Then either Kate or Ellen put forth a fifth and sixth stanza: —

"But Halse espied an old log camp,
Co'day, co'day, co'nanny, co'nan.
And into it they all did tramp,
Co'day, co'day, co'nanny, co'nan.

"'Here's beans,' said Tom. 'Here's salt,' said Ad.
'Boiled beans don't go so very bad,
When nothing else is to be had.
Let's eat our beans and not be sad.'"

I cannot say, certainly, who was responsible for these next stanzas, but the hand-writing is a little like my own at that age.

"They ate their beans and sang a song,
Co'day, co'day, co'nanny, co'nan.
And wished the night was not so long,
Co'day, co'day, co'nanny, co'nan.

"Said Ad, 'What makes that whining noise?'
'By jinks!' cried Tom, 'That's Tyro, boys!'
But when he looked, without a care,
In crawled a little beezling bear!"

There is a great deal more, not less than twenty stanzas; but a few will suffice. Besides, too, I shrink from presenting the more faulty ones. To strangers they will be merely the immature efforts of nameless young folks; but for me a halo of memories glorifies each halting versicle. The one where the tree fell runs as follows. It was Addison's; and in his now distant home, he will anathematize me for exposing his youthful bad grammar.

"But the night grew wild and wilder still,
Co'day, co'day, co'nanny, co'nan.
The forest roared like an old grist-mill,
Co'day, co'day, co'nanny, co'nan.

"At last there came a fearful crack!
A big pine tree had broke its back.
Down it fell, with a frightful smack!
And missed the camp by just a snack!"

Theodora alone made a stanza or two more in keeping with that finer sentiment which the occasion might have inspired in us.

"And we who sat and watched at home,
Co'day, co'day, co'nanny, co'nan;
And wondered why they did not come,
Co'day, co'day, co'nanny, co'nan.
What dread was ours through that long night,
That they had perished was our fear,
Scarce could we check the anxious tear,
Nor slept at all till morning light.

"But safe from storm and falling tree,
Co'day, co'day, co'nanny, co'nan.
Their faces dear again we see,
Co'day, co'day co'nanny, co'nan.
They slept mid perils all unseen,
Some Guardian Hand protecting well;
E'en though the mighty tree trunks fell,
The little camp stood safe between."

After dinner, Mr. Edwards with Asa Doane went after the sheep, and by tramping a path in advance of the flock, drove them home to the barns.

Next day Asa and Halse took a bushel basket, with a bran sack to tie over it, and went to Adger's camp, to liberate and fetch home the little "beezling bear," but found that bruin junior had upset the barrel and made his escape.

THE END OF BOOK FIRST.